

The Book of Acts

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Introduction

We will read of a Movement / Look around see Need (World, Country, State, County, Home)

What we will be reading in these weeks and months to come, was a movement across the whole land. We will be reading the first recorded revival of Christianity. As we look around our world today, as we look at the spiritual state of not just our country, but our state, and not just our state but our county, and not just our county but our hometowns, and not just our hometowns, but our homes, as we all see the need for a fresh move of God's Spirit again over the land.

Books on Past Revivals / Will Read Blueprint of All / No End – Holy Spirit resides in Man

There are many books out there on past revivals, and they are wonderful to read (the Azusa Revival, the Welsh Revival, the Great Awakening). Those revivals are great to read about and they do excite me, but what we will be reading in the months to come is the blueprints for all revivals. The revivals I mentioned all had starts and finishes, and pretty much all their geographical boundaries. Now I don't want you to think that we will be having a 28 chapter study in evangelism for the revival we read of here in Acts had or has no end point, as the Book of Acts is often called the Acts of the Apostles, but the better title is the Acts of the Holy Spirit as God took up residence within man, and then moved and flowed in and through him, and wonderfully that revival happens everyday for each individual who invites Him into their heart. That is truly the heart and theme of this Book of Acts.

Look at Historically and Personally / Vessels – were Uneducated – Had been with Jesus

We will look at this book historically, and personally. Historically for the history of the early church, and personally for the desire of God's Spirit to move through every man, woman, and child. Historically the revival in the Book of Acts had no geographical boundaries as we will read that they turned the world upside-down, and later the Apostle Paul will report that the gospel had reached the whole world, all through the vessels we will read were uneducated and ignorant (as describe by the religious leaders), the only training they had was, that they had been with Jesus: **Acts 17:6 (NKJV)** ⁶*But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.*

Colossians 1:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴*since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints;* ⁵*because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel,* ⁶*which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;*

Acts 4:13 (NKJV) ¹³*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.*

Sadly 1st Church Revival ended 1st Century / Jude – Ephesus - 7 Churches

Sadly, although God the Holy Spirit desires to keep the church a blaze in His Glory, we see through the Scriptures that the revival of the actual first Church didn't even make it out of the first century (although the Holy Spirit is still bringing personal revival everyday throughout the world). Jude will say to the early church he had to write to defend the faith that many were already departing from, Jesus saying to the church in Ephesus, that they had left their first love. Pergamos and Thyatira were all wrapped up in sexual immorality. Sardis had a name that they were alive, but Christ said they were dead. Laodicea had simply become Lukewarm. We find at the end of the letters to the 7 churches, that Jesus is standing outside the door having to knock to get in.

Jude 1:3 (NKJV) ³*Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*

Ephesus - Revelation 2:4 (NKJV) ⁴*Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*

Pergamos - Revelation 2:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴*But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*

Thyatira - Revelation 2:20-21 (NKJV) ²⁰*Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow [£]that woman*

Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. ²¹And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.

Sardis - Revelation 3:1 (NKJV) ¹⁴And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

Laodicea - Revelation 3:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. ¹⁶So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither ¹⁷cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked—

They were Guilty of Forgetting the Pattern – Departed from the Power / Thomas Aquinas

Those churches were guilty of forgetting the pattern that was shown in the Book of Acts, and they departed from the *Power* that set the world on-fire. I am reminded of the story of one of the first popes, and on a particular day he was counting all the silver and gold coins that the church had brought in, and in walked Thomas Aquinas and the pope said well Thomas I guess the church can no longer say silver and gold have I not (with laugh and a smile); Thomas Aquinas answers, true, and neither can the church no longer say, in the Name of Jesus Christ, arise and walk.

Church grown Materially – Dissipated Spiritually / A.W. Tozer

Yes the church has grown materially to prosper, but has greatly dissipated in its power spiritually in many areas of the church (the same can be said for individuals also). AW Tozer wrote that if the Holy Spirit withdraw Himself from the Church, today, 95% of what was going on in the Church would continue uninterrupted (as they continue in their programs and formulas) and no one would know the difference; but if the Holy Spirit departed from the Church in the Book of Acts, 95% of what was going on would have stopped immediately, and everyone would have known the difference.

Holy Spirit mentioned 59 Times / We Read Sketches – not all Inclusive / Wrapped Up

The Holy Spirit will be mention 59 times in this Book of Acts. What we will read are sketches, and are not all inclusive, and we should be thankful that we don't have every detail, because we would then be all worried and wrapped up in making sure we were accomplishing every detail (or else we wouldn't be successful), we would be more wrapped-up in that and totally missing the mark that we need to allow the Spirit to be able to move freely.

Whole Point! Of Book – People getting on their Knees / Here's Pattern – See me for Details

The whole point of the Book of Acts we will see are people getting on their knees, burying their face in prayer, seeking the Living God, asking Him to move in their lives and do a mighty work in their lives first, and then the lives of others around them. In other words, God says to us today that I have given you in the Book of Acts, patterns, pictures, and principles of how the Church is to be, but see Me for the details pertaining to the details. This applies for the Church, and the family, and the individual personally; see Me for the details, walk with Me, speak with Me, let Me give you the details, for that is the New Covenant, God's Spirit writing His will on the table of your heart. You and the Lord walking together and talking things over, and then responding to His prompting.

Hebrews 10:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7

- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

For You Personally – It begins Individually then Moves to Surrounding / Go Therefore

I want you to see this, that the revival begins personally and individually (You – shall receive power) before it moves outward to surrounding areas. After the Holy Spirit came upon a man, that men went out and changed Jerusalem, then onward to Judea and Samaria, and then to the end of the earth. The Book of Acts is a very historical book, as we read the history of the early Church; however, personally and practically it is a picture and promise of what God will do in your life personally when you allow the Holy Spirit to have free-reign within your being. When Jesus said to go therefore and make disciples, the word for go there is a participle which simply means, “as you are going”, make disciples. So, as you are raising your kids, as you as loving your spouse, as you are going to the grocery store, as you are walking on your school campus or workplace, make disciples. What we will be reading over the weeks and months to come are men and woman who got filled with the Holy Spirit, and then went forth from there and then great and mighty things happened; big difference from going someplace, because God said to go, and then saying ok now that we are here Lord, make great and mighty things happen. Church, for me personally I don't want to read books and accounts of other people's revival, I want to live my own revival, and I want to live it here and now, what happened in the Book of Acts 2,000 years ago I so desperately want to happen in my heart right here today; I do not want a Christianity of anything less.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Chapter 1

You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2

Introduction

(Acts 1:1 NKJV) The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

Former Account – Book of Luke / Luke Intelligent / Col 4 – a Doctor / Possibly a Slave

Acts 1:1 (a) - The former account I made, O Theophilus - The Book of Acts was written by Luke. The “former account” referred to is the Gospel that bears his name. From his exacting use of the Greek language, we know Luke was an intelligent man. We also know from Colossians 4:14 that he was a doctor. Many Bible scholars and historians further believe that, since the slaves of wealthy men usually held the position of physician, Luke must likely was a slave. Considering how much I spend each year on doctors, I might be better just to employ one personally myself. **Luke 1:1-4 (NKJV)** ¹Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, ²just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, ³it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.

Colossians 4:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴Luke the beloved physician and Demas greet you. ¹⁵Greet the brethren who are in Laodicea, and Nymphas and the church that is in his house.

Theophilus / Set Luke Free / Amazing Energy into 1 Person / First Principle Jesus Ex.

Acts 1:1 (b) - ...O Theophilus - Theophilus name means, “lover of God”, so for all you lovers of God, this book is written to you. Scholars and historians believe Theophilus was Luke’s owner who, following his own conversion to Jesus Christ, freed Luke to travel with the apostle Paul. I am intrigued as I stop to consider the incredible energy and effort Luke expended to communicate the gospel to his former owner. After all, Luke didn’t say, “Today I am writing the Bible. I had better keep my wits sharp because people will be studying these words for many centuries.” No, for all Luke knew, he was simply writing to one man, which is the same mentality our Lord had. How much energy do we personally put into communicating the gospel to one person. So often we think we should put our energy into mass audiences, but Doctor Luke shows us a the first principle in the Book, which is powerful principle, a pattern, and that is put as much energy into sharing the gospel with one person as if you were sharing with 1000 people. Luke is only following the example that Jesus set:

- As we see Jesus was the Good Shepherd who left the ninety and nine to find one who was lost (Matthew 18:12).
- He was the Great Communicator who conversed with one woman at a well (John 4:7).
- He was the gifted Teacher who sought out one man in a tree, who was called Zacheus (Luke 19:5).

Jesus Began – Acts a Continuation / No End – Story of Holy Spirit filling a Man / Change

Acts 1:1 (c) - ...of all that Jesus began - In his Gospel, Luke had written of the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus, but that was only the beginning. The Book of Acts is the continuation of the gospel story. And the story goes on. The gospel of Luke was all Jesus had done, and now the second account is all that Jesus Christ went on to do. Acts could have easily been called “2 Luke”. Again, let it be said that the Book of Acts has no end, here is no period, it is a continual story of the Holy Spirit filling man, and then moving through a man or woman. How important that is for us today as possibly more than any other time in the last 25 years, our Country is crying out for change. People see and feel a need for change, the status quo is no longer good enough, there is a realization that things need to change. I highly doubt people we get excited about a republican candidate bringing that change, many will get excited about one of those Democratic candidates, but whoever gets elected won’t bring the changed people are looking for, and they will be left even more disillusioned and empty. The good news, the Book of Acts has no period to

it, and it is a continual story of the Holy Spirit filling man, and then moving through a man or woman. What exciting times for us to live in this Country. That's what makes being a Christian so exciting! Jesus is still working because He is Alive! The tomb is empty.

How will you Go Through Life / Will you make a Difference / God does it Through Man

Christian, how will you go through this life, will you just pass through making no difference? Or will you change the immediate circle in which you live? Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; the Holy Spirit moves the same today, as He did 2000 years ago in the upper room, where God turned the world upside-down starting with only 120. God changed the world through the vocal chords of human beings, through the hands of human beings, through the broken hearts of people who desired to see their world changed in their generation. The Spirit of God is moving over the whole earth looking for men and woman's whose heart are turned for God:

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV) ⁸*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Ezekiel 22:30 (NKJV) ³⁰*So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.*

Do and Teach – Divine Order / Want to Impact Children, Ministry / Live it Out Before Them

Acts 1:1 (d) - ...both to do and teach - That's always the divine order—doing first, then teaching. If you want to impact your children, if you want to have power in ministry, follow this simple principle: Do it before you teach it. If you try to teach it before you do it, it just won't work. Our Lord moved with incredible authority, and those who heard Him were “astonished at his doctrine” (Matthew 7:28) because He didn't only teach the Word theoretically, He lived it out before them, and He provided us the power to do it through His Holy Spirit living in us.

Matthew 7:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸*And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, ²⁹for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

Ezra 7:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

(Acts 1:2 NKJV) until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, (Acts 1:3 NKJV) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Science – Repetition of Same Experiment / Infallible Proofs / Historical Writings

Verse 3 says many infallible proofs - Science says if there is any such thing as infallible proof, it is the repetition of the same experiment:

- Jesus rose from the dead, and Mary Magdalene encountered him—experiment one.
- The women encountered him—experiment two.
- The disciples encountered him—experiment three.
- The apostles encountered him—experiment four.
- Five hundred people saw him after the Resurrection—experiment five.

Each one of these is the repetition of the same experiment. They all encountered the same phenomenon. What was it? He was alive! That's what changed the history of the world. Jesus Christ is a historical figure, He is not some mystical spirit that people felt, Jesus Christ was a man (the God-man as we know) who walked this earth some 2,000 years ago. There are many historical writings that concur with that. We read of Him by the Historian Josephus, we read of Him in the Jewish History Book (called the Talmud).

Seen 40 days / Ophthalmologist - they Stared at Him / Our Jurisprudence System

Acts 1:3 (b) ...being seen of them forty days - The Greek word for “seen” is optanomai, from which we get our word ophthalmologist, or eye doctor. It literally means Jesus was being “eyeballed” by them, “stared at,” or “scrutinized.” The disciples didn't gaze at Jesus with wispy, dreamy looks. No, they stared at Him. Wouldn't you? If your leader had been crucified, but came

back on the scene from time to time, wouldn't you eyeball him? Not only did His disciples see Him, but according to 1 Corinthians 15:6, there were five hundred eyewitnesses to whom Jesus appeared following His Resurrection. By our jurisprudence system today two witnesses can send someone to the electric chair; here Jesus is being witnessed by 100's of people, confirming He is alive and the promise of the resurrection is true.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

Jesus appears – then Disappears / Upper Room – Emmaus / Jesus Teaching to live in Presence / Not Leave nor Forsake / If we Lived in His Presence – Sermons on Holiness

We read of Jesus appearing, and then disappearing before His disciples over this 40 days period. There they are behind closed doors and Jesus walks through the wall. There are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they stop to eat, there Jesus is, then there Jesus wasn't. Jesus was teaching His disciples to live continually in the presence of God, that Jesus was there, just as he said He would be, that He would never leave them nor forsake them. Christian, if we were truly conscious of His presence, how many sermons would we ever need to hear on holiness, on purity, on guarding our mind and thoughts? If we were truly conscious of His presence how many sermons would I need to preach on not entering into sexual sin, to not using our tongue as a sword to shred a loved one, a friend, a fellow believer. Over these 40 days Jesus taught them that He was always there, even when they didn't see Him.

John 20:26 (NKJV) ²⁶And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "**Peace to you!**"

Luke 24:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

John 21:1 (NKJV) ¹After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:

That Consciousness / Endured the Pain

It was that consciousness of God being ever present in their lives coupled with the truth of the resurrection that would bring them to that place that they would be willing to endure the following:

- Matthew was burned alive (covered with pitch and tar), but never recanted his account.
- Mark was dragged behind horses and died of the wounds,
- Luke was hung on an olive tree until he died,
- Peter crucified upside down,
- James (the greater – Book of Acts) was beheaded,
- James the (lesser) was thrown off the temple and when his body landed they beat him with clubs,
- Bartholomew was skinned alive,
- Andrew was crucified but preached to his tormentors until he died,
- Thomas was impaled,
- Jude was shot through with 18 arrows,
- John was boiled and banished.
- Paul was beheaded in Rome.
- Many of them saw their families tortured and killed because they continued to preach the Resurrection.
- But not one ever recanted his story.

They had Ever Present Consciousness of God / Didn't Ask Definitions / Changed the World

These men and woman had the ever present consciousness of Christ, and their eyes beheld the resurrection and they lived in the light of the resurrection. They didn't live a life that asked, what is the definition of drunkardness, or, isn't tithing really an OT principle, or, but we are married in God's eyes because we really love each other, or, well what I'm doing isn't hurting anyone.

These men and woman lived in the consciousness of the ever-present Lord, and they changed

the world around them. As for me, if I can just change my family, I will consider it a life well spent. To do so it begins by living in the consciousness of the ever-present God. They were constantly conscious of another Kingdom in another world.

I Want it so Desperately / May this Book Change our Lives

I want this so desperately, oh how I pray this study in Acts changes my life, that I will never be the same during and after this study.

How will you Go Through Life / Will you make a Difference / God does it Through Man

How will you go through this life, will you just pass through making no difference? Or will you change the immediate circle in which you live? Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever; the Holy Spirit moves the same today, as He did 2000 years ago in the upper room, where God turned the world upside-down starting with only 120. God changed the world through the vocal chords of human beings, through the hands of human beings, through the broken hearts of people who desired to see their world changed in their generation. The Spirit of God is moving over the whole earth looking for men and woman's whose heart are turned for God:

You Shall Receive Power – 1:4-8

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Title – You Shall Receive Power / Promises to Disciples – to Us Today

The title of today's message is "You Shall Receive Power", as Jesus will give the promise of the baptism (baptism – to immerse) of the Holy Spirit to His disciples, and that very same promise He promised them, He promises you and I today, to be immersed in the Holy Spirit, so much so that He (the Holy Spirit – the 3rd Person of the Trinity) overflows from us.

I Spent Years Struggling / Drive Through Mentality / Thankfully I Continued

I spent years of my life struggling for the Holy Spirit. Going forward at special altar calls (as a pastor would say if you want the Holy Spirit come up here) and so I would make the trip, everybody would stare at me, people would lay hands on me, and then I would walk back to my seat feeling so stupid because everyone was looking at me, and I knew nothing had changed. Oh don't get me wrong, we need the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but so much like the American mentality I wanted the pull-up, drive-through, One to go filling of the Holy Spirit. But thankfully, I continued on in my walk even without "The Moment", and God revealed to me how to have continual baptism of the Holy Spirit, how to experience and enjoy that power (dunamis) from on high on a continual basis.

Let me State I Recognize / Not Daily – Need it Continually – Recognize there is MORE!

Let me state I recognize in my life that I don't experience it on a daily basis – and I only have myself to blame for that (we will talk more about that in our study today), and yes I (we) do need to continually come back for the filling (and we will talk more about that in our study today), and I would also like to caveat this study with, that although I have experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit many a times in my life and have seen great and mighty things through that baptism, I still can't help but feel deep in my heart that there is still so much more to be experienced for me personally, and therefore I join you not only as a teacher today, but a fellow student, for I am nowhere near satisfied where I am with the Lord, and that is good thing, and I pray that is where you are at yourself today – and if so, let's open our hearts right now and ask God to do a mighty work again (just as He did in the upper room 2,000 years ago), may He do another one today!

Let's Pray

First – What is It / Outline / 3 Workings

The first things we need to make clarity about is exactly what is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and to understand that we need to look at the 3 workings of the Holy Spirit, and here will be the outline for today's study on, "You Shall Receive Power".

The Baptism with the Holy Spirit:

- What it is (The 3 Prepositions of the Holy Spirit)
- What it does (The 3 Places Personally)
- Receiving it (The 7 Steps to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit).

What it is (The 3 Prepositions of the Holy Spirit)

Holy Spirit Promised

(Acts 1:4 NKJV) **And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me;**

(Acts 1:5 NKJV) **"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."**

Much Confusion – People then Miss Out / Need to Understand the 3 Relationships

There is so much confusion today about the baptism in the Spirit. People get hung up and miss out because they don't understand there are three relationships Jesus talked about that a person can and should have with the Holy Spirit (also called Holy Ghost – which I don't care for that translation personally).

1.) With Us “para” / John 14:17 / God will use Vessels like John Baptist /

He is with us (the Greek preposition “para” which means alongside of). The Holy Spirit comes alongside of a person and God's Spirit moves across the earth witnessing to a person their need for a Savior for their sin separates them from the Holy God (John 14:17). God will often time use vessels such as a John the Baptist to proclaim His message. You never would have been born again unless the Holy Spirit had been with you, whispering, “God loves you. You're a sinner, but Jesus died in your place.” Speaking the message of sin, separation, repentance, and restoration. Whether it was through a meeting at church, or at a Billy Graham crusade, whether it was over the radio, or through a friend, it was the Holy Spirit with you who began to tug on the strings of your heart, drawing you to salvation. If the Holy Spirit had not been with you, you could not have been born again. “There is none that seeketh after God,” wrote Paul (Romans 3:11). “We are born again not of the will of man, but of God” (see John 1:13). A person can't, on his own, say, “Hmm. I think I'll be born again.” The only way someone can be born again is for God to sovereignly choose to send His Holy Spirit to work with him. God the Holy Spirit comes alongside a person and says, “Hello, I love you, let Me open your eyes to see it”.

John 14:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Romans 3:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.

John 1:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Warning – The Spirit will not always Strive with Man – Genesis 6:3

Before moving on, let me clearly give warning, the Spirit of God will not always strive with man, so if you haven't received Him yet, be warned that there may come a day where He is no longer knocking on the door of your heart (Genesis 6:3).

Genesis 6:3 (NKJV) ³And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive^e with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

2.) In – En / Comes in and Dwells / We can Cry Out – Abba Father

After coming alongside of us, The Holy Spirit then comes in us the moment we open our heart to the Savior (John 20:22), after hearing the message proclaimed through a vessel chosen by God, or just God speaking to us in His own way; The Greek preposition for in, is “en”. When you opened your heart to Jesus, the Holy Spirit came into you. He indwelt you. You were born again. You were regenerated. The baptism of John spoken of by Christ is the washing away and forgiveness of sin. It is then because the sin and separation has been dealt with, that God takes us residence, the indwelling, it is then we can cry out Abba Father!

John 20:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

²²And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

3.) Comes Upon – Heppi / Comes to Empower Us for Service

Then there is the third, as Jesus said John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit when He comes upon you (the Greek preposition is “heppi”) when He empowers us for service (Acts 1:5). The Spirit of God is available not only to work with you to become a Christian, or to come into your life once you open your heart to Him, but He is now available to come upon your life and to empower you to see your own world turned upside down and made right-side up. In the Old Testament, when the Holy Ghost came upon men like Moses and David, Gideon and Ezekiel, Samson and Bezaleel, it was to empower them for service. So, too, Jesus said to His disciples, “The Spirit is in you, but when the Spirit comes upon you, you will be empowered for unique ministry and service, and then you will be My witnesses” (see Acts 1:4–8).

(Acts 1:5 NKJV) "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

What it does (The 3 Places Personally)

Where will He empower us, 3 places (Jerusalem, Judea, and the ends of the world), lets read verses 6-8:

(Acts 1:6 NKJV) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

(Acts 1:7 NKJV) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Not for you to Know / Cancer – Hurricanes / Not the Why's – but the Who / His Presence

“Are You finally going to establish Your kingdom?” the disciples asked Jesus. “It is not for you to know,” answered Jesus. I have this phrase underlined in my Bible. What makes me think I need to know everything? Certain things are just not for me to know. Rest in that, there are just things that God chooses we are not to know. I don’t know why some get cancer, and some don’t. Why some houses are destroyed by a hurricane while others are not. The answers that we don’t have, and just that, and let us not get all wrapped up on the why, but just be settled on the Who. And the Who is the One who said He would never leave us nor forsake us, and let us be satisfied with His presence, and trust through His presence all other things will work together for good.

Camden – ICU / Not Why – but be Here Lord

I know when Camden was in the ICU for those 2 weeks, days 1 and 2 were very critical; my heart still grips me when I think back of his little lungs gasping for every breath, his stomach sucking in, and his chest expanding dozens of times a minute. I didn’t dwell on the why, for my dwelling was God you are here right now, and into Thy hands I commit the love of my life. I needed His presence more than I needed the answers to the question why. Christian settle in on that, some things He won’t tell us, but always He will be present.

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Last Words of Christ

Verse 8 is the last words of Christ that He spoke while on this earth; now how important are last words.

Not go Witness – but be Witness / Happen Supernaturally – Be My Reality

Jesus didn’t say, “You will witness.” He said, “You’ll be witnesses. Things will happen in a naturally supernatural way in and through you that will witness My reality.” It will happen in 3 places. Jesus is speaking of 3 literal places, but they are also great illustrations of what God will do in each of our lives personally.

What it does (The 3 Places Personally)

- Jerusalem, (You Personally)
- and in all Judea and Samaria, (Your Family)
- and to the end of the earth." (Your World – work, community, missions)

1.) Jerusalem, (You Personally)

Witness – Martyr / We get Reversed / What a person is – Not Does / Changing Diapers

Jesus says you will be My witnesses, and that word for witness is “martyr”, which we most always use in terms of someone dying for their witness. We get that reversed, we say a person was a martyr because they got killed for their witness. God says a person is a martyr because they witness, not because they die. Witness is some thing a person is, not what they do. A person who dies because of witnessing for Christ just proves that they were what they said they were. It takes more Holy Spirit to live for Christ than it does to die for Him. I need more of the Holy Spirit to change diapers than I do to preach a sermon. I need more Holy Spirit to guard my tongue than I do to hand out a tract. If this everyday Christian walk was easy, we wouldn’t need the Holy Spirit, and the Power He supplies us to walk the walk.

Continual Debates – Help Overcome Personal Sin / Wasted Ink / Compromise - Weak

I read a lot, have read a lot, and one of the continual debates I read about in reference to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit coming upon a person, is does the baptism of the Holy Spirit help a person overcome personal sin. Some say yes, some say no, and for those that say no they spend at least a chapter in the book explaining why it doesn’t, explaining it is the Holy Spirit residing in a person that does that, and that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is purely for service unto the Lord. My take on the who discussion, the whole discussion is wasted ink and paper; for I say to you what you have already experienced personally, and that is if you are living in some kind of compromise in your life your witness for the Lord is weak at best. But, what we also know is true, is give me a powerful witness, and it will be very hard to lure me into sin, for I don’t want to blow my witness. Keep me pure and holy, and my light just naturally emanates from me, and people recognize it, and I seem to walk with more spring in my step, and more praise on my lips, and sharing Christ just seems to happen naturally. My point of the discussion/debate, is that the two go together, and are inseparable, and really never should be discussed in separate realms but always with the same context.

2.) and in all Judea and Samaria, (Your Family)

Baptism bring Reality / We are Living Epistles / Sermon on Mount – Exodus - Joshua

The baptism of the Holy Spirit in us, brings the reality of Christ before all who see us, they see there is a difference between us and others. Thus starts the change in our families as they watch, they may never pick the Bible up, but they are reading us page by page, line upon line. They are reading the Sermon on the Mount as they watch us be merciful, as they see our purity, as we are peacemakers rather than trouble makers. They are reading the book of Exodus as they see a person freed from their bondages, they are reading the book of Joshua as they watch them live the victorious Christian life.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NKJV) ²You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

Matthew 5:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

Turn World Upside Down – Maybe your Family Wrong Side Up / Spirit will Change That

These disciples will turn the up-side-down; maybe your world—your kids, your marriage, your business, or your school—is “wrong-side up.” How will it be impacted? How will it be turned upside down and therefore made right? The same way the world has been impacted globally: by the power of the Holy Spirit upon your life. What’s needed is not more programming, not more fleshly striving, not more clever organizing. It is the power of the Spirit that will make things start

happening. The power of the Spirit will change you, your marriage, your family, your business, and your service for Jesus Christ. It will change every aspect of your life.

Acts 17:6 (NKJV) *But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."*

Jesus Knew / Woman Possessions, Multiple Wives, Prostitutes / Woman Need Power

Jesus knew men would need power to love their wives, for before the gospel woman were considered possessions. A man could have multiple wives, and then if that wasn't enough he was free to go down to one of the heathen temples and have a temple prostitute. Jesus knew woman were going to need power to submit to their husbands and to love them, for men can be such knuckle-heads. All these things required supernatural ability for they are just not in our natural make-up.

3.) and to the end of the earth." (Your World – work, community, missions)

Disciples don't Quite Follow / Waiting for Kingdom / Need Gather Citizens 1st

Jesus said wait for the promise of the Father, for John baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. The disciples don't quite follow what all that means (we can from our vantage point), but for them they thought the power coming was going to be God establishing His kingdom on earth. The Jews were always waiting for God to take back possession of Jerusalem and establish His kingdom, just as God had promised to David. But Jesus is saying we have to build the kingdom before we establish the kingdom, we have to gather the citizens of the kingdom first before I set it up. Now looking for God's kingdom come is not wrong, looking for His soon appearing is not wrong, in fact it is a vital life principle for all Christians, and we will study more on that next week in verses 9-12. But for right now, Jesus says the Father has that specific time set apart, but until then, I got some things I want you to be doing.

Strong Point to Consider – Telling Story not Enough / Storyteller Needs Power

Now here is a strong point for consideration, and it is vital in our witness, just telling the story isn't enough. These people have walked with Jesus for 3 years, they saw Him crucified and die, and then they saw Him raise from the dead; you would think just telling that story would be enough to change the world, but Jesus says its not, so much so that Jesus said "wait" before you go, wait until I give you power. You see, the story is good enough, the story by itself is enough to convince a person, but why the power needed with the story? It isn't the story that needs power, it is the storyteller that does. The storyteller needs the power to stand, when the story is rejected, when the story is mocked, when the story is attacked, and.....the storyteller will need power to stand when they are personally rejected, mocked, or even attacked. Without the power, the storyteller would quit telling the story at some point, for they will become beaten or discouraged at some point once the rejection of the story keeps coming back upon them. Just looking at the parable of the Sower and the Seed, and we can gather 3 out of 4 times we will be rejected (I'm not saying that is law, I'm just saying it is a pretty good example that sure does seem to ring true today).

Storyteller has to Compete – Evolution, Materialism, Rome, Jews, Slavery

The storyteller has to compete against evolution, materialism, and all roads lead to God. These disciples will have to face the Roman government, the Jewish religious system, false religions (all things we will study over the weeks and months to come) many of them would have to lay their life down because of the story they will tell, Jesus said wait, you will need this power. These disciples are going to preach a message that all men are created equal and that God loved each person the same, imagine preaching that message in a world where 4 out of 5 people were slaves. The storyteller needs power for all that will come against them.

Receiving it (The 7 Steps to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit).

How do we Receive

So, just how do we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38 gives us our starting point, and before we are done we will see 7 steps in receiving the Holy Spirit. For the background on Acts 2, the Day of Pentecost has arrived, Peter filled with the Holy Spirit preaches his first sermon, they people are convicted and ask Peter what shall we do with what you have said: **Acts 2:37-39 (NKJV)** ³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" ³⁸Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

1.) Repentance unto Salvation – Repent means to change your mind, and it all starts with changing your mind of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for you. The first step toward the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. *(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

2.) Repentance of Sin – The second step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to turn from our personal sin. We cannot have habitual unrepentant sin in our lives and expect God to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. We need to do some heart searching, ask God to search your heart (Psalm 139), and then confess those sins and ask God to take them away. We need to be serious about our sins (no matter how little). God's Word is clear (1 John 3:22) that we will not receive if we are not keeping His commandments (and I believe the context of this verse speaks of a habitual lifestyle of sin): *(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

Psalms 139:23-24 (NKJV) ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; ²⁴ And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

1 John 3:22-23 (NKJV) ²²And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

3.) Be Baptized - The third step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to be baptized. Although I am referring to water baptism, I am more specifically referring to the "public profession" of Christ. It is the separating from the old life, the sending of your death notification of the old life, and it is letting the world know, I am Christ's and Christ is mine. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not for the secret Christian. *(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

4.) Be Obedient - The forth step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to be obedient to the point of surrender (Acts 5:32). It is the surrendering of your personal wants and desires, and being totally obedient to God's will for your life. We will not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit if we are afraid of what that may mean to us. If we are afraid that God's will may upset our "plans" for life, we are afraid we may have to, go, or do something we are uncomfortable with, then we will not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now, consider two things while considering this point, and the first is that our logic is totally messed up, in that we are afraid, we afraid because we have no power. Receive the power, and the fear disappears (1 Timothy 1:7). Secondly, believe by faith there is nothing to be feared in God's will; God's will, will always prove in the final outcome the best and the sweetest thing for us (Ecclesiastes 3:11). *(Acts 5:32 NKJV) "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) ⁷For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NKJV) ¹¹He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end.

5.) Desire - The fifth step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to desire earnestly. The asking of this verse in Luke 11 is the asking that springs from real and intense desire. The asking is in the mind of not asking in the passing and halfhearted whim, but the intense asking. Isaiah 44 the Lord says I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, I will pour my spirit upon thy seed. When one is thirsty, drought thirsty, there is but one cry: water, water! water! Every pore of the body seems to have a voice that cries out, water!. So when our heart has one cry, "The Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit, then it is that desire that will bring the flood. It is when we realize that we are lacking, that we need more power, it is then we are truly craving for what we ask, rather than asking for what we as good Bible students know the Word says we should ask for:

Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV)⁹"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Isaiah 44:3 (NKJV)³ For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, And floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, And My blessing on your offspring;

6.) Ask - The sixth step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to ask, simply asking, asking simply. Verse 13 of Luke is preceded by verse 9, where Jesus tells us to ask, to seek, to knock, and the verb tense is to keep asking until you get what you ask for. We simply ask in faith, Lord baptism me with the Holy Spirit, give me that power from on high. Then, step seven.....

Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV)⁹"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

7.) Believe - The seventh step towards the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to believe. We receive the Holy Spirit just as we received Jesus Christ, by asking Him to come into our lives, so once you have asked, believe that He has done it. Believe Luke 11:9-13, believe Mark 11:24, believe it because God's Word says it. Believe it because God wants you to have it, He wants you to be filled to overflowing, endued with Power from on high, so that you may change your Jerusalem, Judea, and outer parts of the world.

Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV)⁹"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"

Mark 11:24 (NKJV)²⁴Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

Spent Years Struggling / But God Revealed

I spent years of my life struggling for the Holy Spirit. Going forward at special altar calls (as a pastor would say if you want the holy spirit come up here) and so I would make the trip, everybody would stare at me, people would lay hands on me, and then I would walk back to my seat feeling so stupid because everyone was looking at me, and I knew nothing had changed. But thankfully, I continued on in my walk even without "the moment", and God revealed to me how to have continual baptism of the Holy Spirit, how to experience and enjoy that power (dunamis) from on high on a continual basis. It are these seven steps (not that this is some magical formula); but I believe the Word is the Word, and it shows us what needs to be done in order for us to receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit. I pray that you will take these 7 steps, pray each one specifically, deal with anything that needs to be dealt with, and then pray (asking) to receive the Holy Spirit, and believe that you have received it, just as you believed you received Jesus Christ that day you asked Him into your life.

John 3:16 (NKJV)¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Closing – Leaky Vessels – Need Refilling / Acts 4

Let me close with this, we are leaky vessels, and we need to be re-filled. The Scriptures prove that out clearly. In Acts 2 the disciples are filled with the Holy Spirit, then only a few chapters later, which are only several days later, we read of them being filled again:

Acts 4:31 (NKJV) ³¹And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

When Recognize – Ask Again / Free Refills / Eph 5 – a Continual Filling

And when you recognize that you need it again, you ask for it again, go back to step 1 and work your way through it again, why? Because we are leaky vessels and we need to continually be re-filled, and the Scriptures clearly support that. In chapter 4 of Acts we read of the same guys who had previously been filled with the Holy Spirit, being filled again (I love it, free re-fills). Be filled (it says in Ephesians 5) with the Holy Spirit, the verb tense is a “continual filling”.

Ephesians 5:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Recognize don't Experience Daily / Do the Daily / When Don't – how Costly

Let me state I recognize in my life that I don't experience it on a daily basis, and yes I do need to continually come back for the filling, but I have found that I experience the soaking of the Holy Spirit, that power in my walk to say no to sin, to share Christ, and just go through my day with the joy of fellowship, when I “Do the Daily” (see below), yes simply daily, for the daily, are literally the 7 things we have just studied. Not doing the daily, is costly, for we miss out on all that we have just studied, and my what we have just studied and will study.

- Jesus first, I'll get around to reading my emails later
- Taking every thought captive
- Reading the Word,
- Meditating _ repeating a Biblical principle or promise
- Listening to Bible Studies.
- And, simply seeking 1st the Kingdom

Spend Little Time on These Things / Not Satisfied – Glad to be Here Today

I think I spend so little time seeking after these things. I am not satisfied presently, and I want more, and I am so thankful to be where we are at in our verse-by-verse. For like Paul said, I too fill, and maybe you do too:

Philippians 3:12-14 (NKJV) ¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(Zechariah 4:6 NKJV) So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.

Looking for His Soon Return

Acts 1:9-11

(Acts 1:9 NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(Acts 1:10 NKJV) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

(Acts 1:11 NKJV) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Church of Ascension / Jesus Footprint / Luke 24 – to Bethany / Become Vulnerable

On the Mount of Olives, there is a church called the Church of the Ascension. If you go there today, guides will show you (for like 5 dollars) a footprint that is supposedly the place from which Jesus took off when He ascended to heaven. Yet Luke 24 says that Jesus traveled with His disciples past the Mount of Olives to Bethany before He ascended (Luke 24:50). When people don't read the Word, they are vulnerable to traditions and myths that have no biblical base at all. **Luke 24:50-51 (NKJV)** ⁵⁰And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Majority of Seminaries / Doesn't Matter / Title today's Message / Purpose and Power

Well, today the major majority of churches and seminaries no longer teach on the Return of Jesus Christ to this earth (even if this verse says that He will), but it doesn't matter if they don't teach that anymore, for it will not stop Him from coming. He is coming, and He is coming soon, just as today's text says that He will. The title of today's study is, "Looking for His Soon Return", and the person that lives in the expectancy of His return in their lifetime, will live with power, and will live with purpose, as compared to the person that is not looking for his soon return, and doesn't expect Him to return in their lifetime.

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Past Study on Power / 3 Powerful Principles / Remind You – Turned world Upside Down

We have been speaking of power in our study in our first two studies in this Book of Acts, and we have already seen three powerful principles on how we can experience great power in our Christian Life, as we have seen what gave those early disciples power. Remind you, it were these men and woman who turned the world upside down:

Acts 17:6 (NKJV) ⁶But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."

Four Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)

Recap 3 Principles, Resurrection, Ever Present, Baptism of Spirit / 4th – His Coming

The early church and disciples experienced the power of the Resurrection, they witnesses the resurrection. The early church and disciples lived in the consciousness of the Ever-Present God, as Jesus would appear, then disappear on them, all the while teaching them to live as if they never knew when Jesus would “pop” in on them. As we studies last week, and will in weeks to come, the early church and disciples were filled to overflowing with the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives. And today (although we are far from done on this list) we will see how the early church and disciples experienced great power in their lives because they were always looking for the soon return of Jesus Christ.

How Tarry / Jude Sums it Up

In our last study we saw the promise of Holy Spirit so that they/we may receive power from on how to be God's witnesses. They were told to tarry in Jerusalem for that promise, as are we, and I refer you back to last weeks study for an indepth study on the baptism of the Holy Spirit, or let me give you a quick summation on how we tarry for the Holy Spirit in the year 2008, seeing how Jude summed it up quite simply for us (which includes our study today):

(Jude 1:20 NKJV) But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit,

(Jude 1:21 NKJV) keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

I Call Them – Doing the Daily / Build Faith – Rom 10 / Praying Holy Spirit / Love / Looking

I call them, doing the daily, and it is in doing the daily things – daily, we will receive the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit both in us, and working through us. Jude says we are to build our faith up, as faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (Rom 10:17). Praying in the Holy Spirit, which means to break past our flesh into the spiritual realm of prayer. Christian, here is what I have experienced personally, and I suspect you have too, it takes some amount of time to break out of the flesh and into the spiritual realm. Rarely do I sit down and start to pray, and immediately find myself deep in the things of the Spirit; I find my self thinking about things to do, things left undone, past conversations, what new in the news. I find it takes me some time just in quietness, in listen to worship, or reading a few chapters, that I finally find myself truly focused on what is immediately before me, and that is that I have come to have a private audience with the King of the Universe, and my King has been anxiously awaiting my arrival. And thirdly, Jude says, “keep yourself in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life”, which is looking for His soon return, and those who keep looking for His soon return are keeping themselves in the love of God, and that brings us to our study today.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV)¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Start verse 6 - Context

So let's start our study in verse 6 for context.

(Acts 1:6 NKJV) Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

(Acts 1:7 NKJV) And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

Excited Kingdom on Earth / Putting Down World's Power / Seek First

These men were expecting the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, they were excited about the possibility of God establishing His Kingdom now, putting down of the world's power (Rome), putting down of Satan's power, Lord will you establish your Kingdom in just a few days. Jesus had been talking to them about the things of the Kingdom over those three years, they were excited about the Kingdom to come, and Jesus had told them to seek first the kingdom of God all these things would be added unto them:

(Matthew 6:33 NKJV) "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Priority was Kingdom of God

These men's priority was the kingdom of God. But Jesus said it is not for you to know the times or season, but wait for the power from on high:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Then Jesus Ascended

And then, Jesus ascended into heaven.

(Acts 1:9 NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(Acts 1:10 NKJV) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

(Acts 1:11 NKJV) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Steadfastly – to Strain at / Watching Rocket Launches / Ascended gradually - Gone

Steadfastly – to strain at, they could see Him ascending from near to far-far away. I remember watching rocket launches when I lived and worked at the Space Center. At lift off you see it right in front of you, big as life, and then in 60 seconds the rocket is already like 300 miles away, but it still clearly visible. I can remember one night launch being able to see the rocket engines 7 minutes later; that was probably like 2,100 miles away, but I could still see it. That is what these disciples are doing, there he is, I can still see Him, can you see Him, right there, look where I am pointing, oh yea I see Him now. Jesus probably ascended gradually so they didn't think this was once again His appearing and disappearing as He was teaching them how to live "in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God".

Imagine the Grand Plans

So Jesus is gone, He made it clear, I am leaving now, I imagine all their excitement and grand plans were deflated as they watched Jesus ascending. Oh no, now what are we going to do. They would immediately become keenly aware of their need for power from on High. They probably were imagining going back into Jerusalem, hey Caiaphas, yo Pilate, the truth is here, whose the big man now. Maybe they pictured going into the Praetorium, excuse me we are looking for the soldiers who had the hammer the other day, and I believe someone has my Master's robe. All these grand plans and visions, and there He is, ascending on high, go make disciples. My first thought would be I am going to need this power He told me to tarry for.

Disciples left Standing / Not Understanding / 2 Angels

The disciples are standing there looking up not really understanding what just happened, and then two angels said why stand gazing up in the sky, this same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will also come in the same like manner.

From Point On – Looking for Return / Lived Lives Expecting

From that point on they began to look for the return of Jesus Christ, they lived lives expectant of His return in their lifetime.

Even Rumor of John

There was even a rumor in the early church and that was that Jesus would return before John died. That was based off their misunderstanding of when Jesus told Peter not to worry about John's ministry (hey what about John) and just to focus on his own. Jesus said if I will, that John not die before I return, what does that matter to you:

John 21:21-23 (NKJV) ²¹Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, "But Lord, what about this man?"

²²Jesus said to him, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me."

²³Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, "If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?"

John Sick – People Excited

The rumor went around that Jesus would return before John die. So every time John got a cold people got excited, hey did you hear John is ill. Doctor Luke probably said sorry John, I'm busy right now, can't come see ya.

Every Generation / God Gives Signs

In every generation from the disciples to our day, God leaves us signs and indicators that His return is near. Here are the signs for us:

- Rebirth of Israel (May 14th, 1948)
- The re-establishment of the Roman Empire (the European Union)
- Coming together of One World Religion (All roads lead to God)
- Coming together of the One World Currency (Mark of the Beast)

And, how about life in general:

Some would depart from the faith and go into devil worship-1 Tim 4:1.

People would mock about the last days and not believe-2 Pe 3:3; Jude 18.

People would become lovers of themselves-2 Tim 3:1,2.

People would be disobeying their parents-2 Tim 3:1,2.

People would be grateful for nothing-2 Tim 3:1,2.

Homosexuality would increase-Lk 17:28,30; ref Gen 19:5; Ro 1:24,26,27.

People would be without self-control in sex-2 Tim 3:1,2,6; Rev 9:21, Lk 17:28,30; Jude 7.

People would love pleasures more than God- 2 Tim 3:1,2,4.

False Teachers/Religions will be many – Matt 24:5

Wars – Matt 24:6 – not a single day of peace on earth since before WW1

Rumors of War – Matt 24:6 – Cold War most expensive war ever fought, and not one bullet fired

Famines – Matt 24:7 – the Oil prices have caused world-wide inflation, and countries like Africa can't feed their people

Pestilence – Matt 24:7 - Aids, SARS

Earthquakes – Matt 24:7 – Life Magazine says in last 15 yrs 500, 000 people died in earthquakes.

Knowledge will Increase – Daniel 12:4 – look at the Technology world around us.

Indicators in Full-Blown Mode / Listen to Prophecy Update

Wow, all the indicators are in full-blown mode before us. I encourage you if you missed it to go listen to our Prophecy Update which is available on-line at the Media Page.

3 Reasons

Why does God give us these signs that His return is so near? He does this for 3 reasons, 3 personal applications:

- To give us an Urgency for Spreading the Gospel.
- To Lighten our Touch on the Material Things of the World.
- For a Purifying Effect upon our Lives.

1.) To give us an Urgency for Spreading the Gospel

Before Heart Attacks & Car Wrecks / Now Planes – Schools – Bombers?

Times have changed; we live in a period like none other. Before we viewed sudden deaths as heart attacks or car wrecks, but now it has become much more complicated than that, planes flying into buildings, school shootings, child abductions, how long until homicide bombers in our malls and restaurants.

If All Happen at Once – Satan Desensitizes / Every Week – Share more Aggressively

But you know, if all this happened at once (bombings and shootings) it would shock us, but Satan has a strategy where he gradually desensitizes us to the horrors of these things. If 9/11

happened every week or month we would have a whole greater urgency of sharing the gospel. If there was a shooting in our schools every week we would make sure our kids knew Jesus before they got on that bus wouldn't we.

The Lord's Urgency – Coming Back Unannounced / Our Voices Removed / Live Forever

But the Lord leaves us with this urgency, even when times our good, hey I'm coming back at any moment, and when the rapture happens (whether by seizing or death), your voice will be removed from telling those loved ones of yours the way to eternal life. Oh, let me correct that statement, everyone lives forever, again – everyone lives forever, but it is the quality of life that is at stake, eternal life in heaven, or eternal life in hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth:

Matthew 25:23 (NKJV)²³His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

Matthew 25:30 (NKJV)³⁰And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Read Book Revelation – Urgency to Share / Mercy – Grace - Peace

Read the book of Revelation, and think of loved ones not saved, and you will have a great urgency to share the gospel. You won't find the word mercy in the book of Revelation, the word grace only in chapter 1 and then not again until the last verse of the book, nor will you find the word peace after chapter 1. The very thought should give us an urgency of spreading the gospel.

Our Voice removed at Rapture / Tell how Have Peace with Him

God leaves us with that sense of His soon return, so we may constantly live as we must tell the world about Him, His love and the way to have peace with Him.

Prison Chaplain – Charlie Peace

Leonard Ravenhill tells of Charlie Peace, a convicted criminal sentenced to die by hanging. On his death-walk to the gallows, the prison chaplain glibly read him some Bible verses from a book called, "The Consolation of Religion." Charlie was shocked that a minister who professed to believe in the Bible could so coldly and professionally read about hell without so much as a tear in his eye or a quiver in his voice. How can he believe that there is an eternal fire that never consumes its victims and yet be so unmoved? Charlie mused to himself. Finally, unable to hold his peace any longer, the convict snapped at the chaplain, "If I believed what you and the church of God say you believe, even if England were covered with broken glass from coast to coast, I would walk over it, if need be, on hands and knees, and think it worthwhile living, just to save one soul from an eternal hell.

3 Reasons

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2.) To Lighten our Touch on the Material Things of the World.

Caught up in Material things / Satisfy Material Things – Make Plans Around Them

It is so easy for us to get caught up in the material things of the world, so much so we get caught in satisfying the material things in our lives, they become our priorities, we make our plans around them.

Perspective

The thought that the Lord is coming soon keeps us in the proper balance, keeps us in proper perspective. These early followers believed it so much that they shared all things, they thought

hey we are going to be out here soon, so why hang on to it (Acts 4), the early Church truly had a light touch on the material things, thus they were freed from the bondage material things (CAN bring if we allow it):

Colossians 3:1-2 (NKJV) *¹If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.*

Acts 4:34-35 (NKJV) *³⁴Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.*

How Easy to be Distracted / Whole Saturdays

How easily we can become distracted with our stuff, and it doesn't even mean we worship it. How easy it is to spend whole Saturdays taking care of, cleaning, fixing, our stuff. The more stuff we have the more we have to take care of, and the more time we spend on it, and away from the things of the Lord.

When Opportunity Comes / Imminent Return – Set Priorities

Will you have time to share the gospel, do ministry when the opportunity comes, or will you have to say I am too busy. The thought of Jesus' imminent return will help you set your priorities:

(Matthew 6:33 NKJV) *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

3 Reasons

Why does God give us these signs that His return is so near? He does this for 3 reasons, 3 personal applications:

- To give us an Urgency for Spreading the Gospel.
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3.) For a Purifying Effect upon our Lives.

Purifying Effect / 1 John 3

Thirdly, the realization that Jesus could come at anytime produces a great purifying effect in our lives. The apostle John said:

(1 John 3:2 NKJV) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

(1 John 3:3 NKJV) And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Vital Church Teaches This / Sadly Most Don't

It is a tremendous purifying hope that He could come at anytime. It is vital that the church teaches continually on the rapture, sadly most don't.

Find Doing when Lord Returns / Be the Wise Servant

There are many things I don't want the Lord finding me doing when He returns. I want to be busy about the things of the Lord. Jesus calls such a one as a faithful and wise servant:

(Matthew 24:45 NKJV) "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season?"

(Matthew 24:46 NKJV) "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing."

(Matthew 24:47 NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods."

Tendencies of Those that Don't

On the opposite side, look at the effect of the servant that says the Lord delays His coming. He began to live a careless life, abusing people, and drawn to drunkardness.

(Matthew 24:48 NKJV) "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,'"

(Matthew 24:49 NKJV) "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards,"

(Matthew 24:50 NKJV) "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of,"

(Matthew 24:51 NKJV) "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Young drawn to Lust / Fights in Home

How many people would not be drawn to the lust of the flesh if the rapture was a forefront of their minds. How many fights and arguments in the home would not be if the rapture was in the forefront of a husband and wife minds. I surely don't want to be fighting with my wife when the rapture happens.

Whole Point – Be Ready / Produces Purifying Effect

Jesus whole point of the story (Matt 24) is to be ready, to watch. Looking for His soon return, looking and expecting the rapture produces a purifying effect in our lives.

Important have Same Attitude / Gospel – Material – Purity / Lord creates that Belief

How important that we have the same attitude of the Lord's return as did the early church. It gave them urgency in getting the gospel out, it gave them the proper perspective on the material things, and an emphasis on purity. As they believed that Jesus was coming at any moment to wind things up. The Lord created that belief in the early church that His return was soon, and I believe He does it in every generation, but I look at the signs before us today and have to have the expectation that we are the generation that will see His return.

If not Today - Tomorrow

If the rapture doesn't happen today, then it is tomorrow. Ask me tomorrow, and I'll tell you the same thing.

3 Reasons

Why does God give us these signs that His return is so near? He does this for 3 reasons, 3 personal applications:

- To give us an Urgency for Spreading the Gospel.
- To Lighten our Touch on the Material Things of the World.
- For a Purifying Effect upon our Lives.

They Experienced Power

These disciples and the early church lived and experienced the power of God in a great and mighty way, and they did so because:

Four Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)

Bartholomew, 70AD (exert from Jesus Freaks pg 205)

I close with the story of one man, he was the disciple/apostle Bartholomew, and his story should be evident all that we have just discussed, for he lived in power.

"You are unsettling the worship of our gods. And not only that, you have perverted my own brother!" the king of Armenia shouted at Bartholomew. But Bartholomew did not back down. One of the original twelve disciples, he had boldly preached Jesus Christ for 37 years. Starting in the heathen cities throughout what is now Turkey, he then traveled to India. Here, after he learned the language, he translated the gospel of Matthew and taught the Indians in their native tongue. Later he preached in twelve different cities in the country of Armenia (located between the present-day countries of Turkey and Iran). Many people turned from idolatry to worship Jesus, including the king of Armenia's brother and his family. Bartholomew boldly answered the king, saying, "I have preached the true worship of God throughout your country. I have not perverted your brother and his family, but rather have converted them to the truth." King Astyages threatened Bartholomew, "Unless you stop preaching Christ and make sacrifices to the god Ashtaroth, you will be put to death." "You can be sure of this, King Astyages; I will never sacrifice to your idol. I would rather seal my testimony with my blood than do the smallest act against my faith or conscience." Upon hearing this, the king ordered, "I want this man to suffer severe torture. First beat him with rods. After that, suspend him upside down on a cross and skin him alive!" Following the king's command, Bartholomew was beaten, crucified and flayed. Despite all this, he was still conscious and continued to exhort the people to believe in Jesus and worship the true God. Finally, to prevent him from saying anything else, the king's men took an ax and cut off his head. Bartholomew was united with Jesus, his Lord.

The Power of the Upper Prayer Room

Acts 1:12-26

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Jesus Ascends – Leaves no Plans / Just Wait

Last study we ended with the Lord ascending. Now He ascends and leaves the church no plans except to wait. They were just told to go change the world, all the way to the ends of the world, yet no instruction on how to structure the church, what is the church hierarchy, whether to go verse by verse through the Bible or to teach topically, pews or chairs, are electric guitars ok, how many miles away must it be you can call yourself the 1st first Baptist Church again, nothing except wait for the Promise of the Holy Spirit, should we wear robes or are Hawaiian shirts alright, nothing except to wait.

(Acts 1:9 NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(Acts 1:10 NKJV) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

(Acts 1:11 NKJV) who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven."

Wait for the Power – Happen at Pentecost / 10 days from Now

Jesus has told them to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit in which would endue them with power. Now this will happen on Pentecost, which was 50 days after the Passover, Jesus has been with them for 40 days, therefore they are going to wait for about 10days.

(Acts 1:1 NKJV) The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach,

(Acts 1:2 NKJV) until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen,

*(Acts 1:3 NKJV) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, **being seen by them during forty days** and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.*

Past Study on Power / 4 Powerful Principles / Remind You – Turned world Upside Down

We have been speaking of power in our past studies and we have already seen 4 powerful principles on how we can experience great power in our Christian Life, as we have seen what gave those early disciples power. Remind you, it were these men and woman who turned the world upside down:

Acts 17:6 (NKJV) *But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."*

Four Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)

Recap 4 Principles, Resurrection, Ever Present, Baptism of Spirit, His Soon Return

The early Church saw and experienced the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, they saw Jesus Christ overcome the grip of sin and death, and knew same power that raised Christ from the dead, that had defeated sin, was available to them also (Ephesians 1:19). Christian do you believe that today, can I remind you of that today, there is no sin (habit, addiction) that has power over you today for the power that raised Christ from the dead and gave Him victory over sin is available (promised) to you today. IF that power can raise Christ from the dead, then you can sure it will raise you over your bad habit, your tongue, your lust, your addiction, your (and you fill in the blank). Let me also be very direct here, there is no caveat or disclaimer to that passage; The Lord doesn't say the resurrection power is available to you today (unless you are overworked, or unless it is your menstrual cycle, or unless your spouse or kids are laying it on you, or unless you have a physical or mental illness). There is no exceptions to the resurrection power raising you up out of whatever that thing is that is keeping you down, keeping you from rising up for the glory of God. Secondly, the early Church lived in consciousness that God was always present in their lives, that at any moment He could appear right in the middle of what they were doing, whether that was eating, walking down the road to Emmaus, fishing, or fighting with their spouse, or clicking on the internet. Thirdly, the early Church was filled with the Holy Spirit to be witnesses to Jesus, and I believe this is the best and correct translation, not "be My witnesses", but "witnesses to Me", for as we live lives trying to "impress" if you will, then people watching will naturally be impressed. When we live to please and honor Jesus first and foremost, the witness unto the world will naturally follow because we will bring reality and certification to the work of Christ in a person's life.. Fourthly, the early Church were living as if Jesus was coming back at any moment to interrupt their lives, and thus they had a sense of urgency to share the gospel, they had a light touch on the things of the world, and they lived pure lives, not wanting to be found in sin at His appearing.

***Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV)** ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

***Luke 24:31-32 (NKJV)** ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³²And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"*

***(Acts 1:8 NKJV)** "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

***(1 John 3:2 NKJV)** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

***(1 John 3:3 NKJV)** And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

Pick-up Verse 12 – Disciples Huddled Together / There is Power in Upper Room

Today we will pick up here in verse 12, as we find the disciples huddled together in the upper room, waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had promised. As we will see today, there is power in the Upper Room, and for every person here today, I pray that after this study you go prepare yourself an Upper Room if you don't already have one, and if you do, that after today's study you will have a new excitement about getting to your Upper Room on a daily basis.

5 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)

The Upper Room Prayer Meeting

(Acts 1:12 NKJV) Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

(Acts 1:13 NKJV) And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas the son of James. (Acts 1:14 NKJV) These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

Chronological Events / Stay in Context

Let's review the chronological events that have happened up to this point, it's good to have a clear and logical flow of events to keep us in the correct context of the Scriptures. We go verse by verse, but it is important to study them within the context that they happened (all the associated Bible passages can be found in the supplemental notes that are at the end of this study):

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NKJV) *¹Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you— unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.*

Chronological Events of Jesus after the Crucifixion

- Resurrection Sunday – Woman come to Garden Tomb / Met by Angel
- Resurrection Sunday – Woman tell Peter and John of Jesus' Resurrection
- Resurrection Sunday – Peter and John run to the Empty Tomb
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Mary Magdalene (and woman)
- Resurrection Sunday - Guards Bribed by Religious Leaders
- Resurrection Sunday – Mary Magdalene tells Disciples she saw Jesus
- Jesus appears to Peter
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus appears to the 2 on Road to Emmaus
- Resurrection Sunday – The 2 Return from Emmaus to Jerusalem
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (no Thomas) in Jerusalem – Receive the Holy Spirit (1st appearance to the Disciples)
- 8 days after Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (and Thomas) in Jerusalem (2nd appearance to the Disciples)
- Jesus did Many Other Things
- (at least 8 days after Resurrection) – Jesus appears to Disciples at Sea of Tiberias (also called Sea of Galilee) (3rd appearance to Disciples)
- Jesus asks Peter “Do you Love Me – Feed My Sheep”
- Jesus Predicts Peter's Death / Rumor that John would not Die
- Jesus did Many Other Things – World couldn't Contain (appears to the 500)
- 40 days after Resurrection – Jesus Ascends into Heaven
- (for 10 days after the Ascension) the Disciples wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit
- 50 Days after the Resurrection – The day of Pentecost - The Disciples Baptized with the Holy Spirit

Wait 10 / Wow – Prayed whole Hour / Step 5 / Not Duration-but Desire / Not go Anywhere

So they will wait 10 days. How many times I think I tarried hard after a whole hour; how many times I gave up on something after only a few days of praying. We had said, step 5 on the path to being baptized in the Holy Spirit is to “desire” to be touched by God with the same desire we would desire water after being stranded in the desert for 3 days. I believe what we see here isn't so much a demonstration of duration, but of desire. These disciples are hungering and thirsting for righteousness, they are desiring to be filled. These disciples were not going anywhere until they received of Jesus all that Jesus promised of them. How about you? Are there promises of God you haven't received yet, although you know they are yours? Maybe you haven't got them yet because you won't slow down long enough to receive them. I pray we all have a day (and days) that we tarry for the Lord, not leaving nor letting go, until we have that which we know He

has promised us, yet we haven't taken possession of it. Let that day be today, get with the Lord in your Upper Room, say to Him, "Lord I know the know the thing you want for me Wait until you get, don't leave until you do, it will be worth the wait, just ask the disciples.

Matthew 5:6 (NKJV)⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

7 Steps to Receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

- 1.) Repentance unto Salvation
- 2.) Repentance of Sin
- 3.) Be Baptized
- 4.) Be Obedient
- 5.) Desire
- 6.) Ask
- 7.) Believe

Tarry in Your Upper Room / Uninterrupted / Great you Pray in Car

The place to tarry is in your Upper Room, for there is power in the Upper Room, that place that we go quietly and have uninterrupted time with the Lord. I think it is great when we pray on the drive to work (keep doing that), or in the shower (keep singing), or on our walks, but how often do distractions and interruption come in those places (some guy cuts you off, your devotion goes from intercession to supplication, oh Lord please forgive me for what I just said or thought). Get in your Upper Room, just you and the Lord, let it be totally uninterrupted, set apart and dedicated, waiting for the Lord to show up, and this I can promise you, you won't have to wait long, you won't have to wait 10 days for He desires to meet with you, and lead you in the conversation of prayer.

He loves being with us, and can't wait for the door to the Upper Room to open and we enter in:

Romans 8:26-27 (NKJV)²⁶Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. ²⁷Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Notice – No more Greatest / Thy Will be Done / Prayer Produces Unity – Unity Empowers

Do you also notice something so different that what we had saw back in the Gospels, these disciples are gathered together in unity, no longer arguing over who will be the greatest in the kingdom, but only desiring that the Kingdom Come, not thy will but your will be done. Prayer produces unity, and unity empowers prayer. When you pray with people, you experience a glorious unity that allows a greater release of blessing. That is why Jesus said, "If two or three of you agree in prayer, there's a dynamic released, and things will happen" (see Matthew 18:20). As a result of this prayer meeting, the church would soon no longer consist of one hundred twenty believers hiding away in an upper room, but would, in a single day, explode to number over three thousand (Acts 2:41).

Luke 22:42 (NKJV)⁴²saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done."

Matthew 18:19-20 (NKJV)¹⁹"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Acts 2:41 (NKJV)⁴¹Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Hey Christian – If do that 120 / Do that in Your Life / Divorce - 1100

Hey Christian, if God can do that with 120 people from different walks of life, different backgrounds, different social status, religious backgrounds, and many other differences, how much more so can He do in your family, in your marriage. The statistics are in, husbands and wives who pray together, read the word, and attend church together have a divorce rate of 1 in 1100. There is power in the Upper Room, make one for you and your spouse, invite the kids in daily.

Prayer produces unity, and unity empowers prayer!

Important note – Who is There / Last time Mary Mentioned in NT – She is Waiting

Verse 14 - These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers - I think it important to note who all is here, ...and Mary the mother of Jesus... This is the last time Mary is mentioned in the New Testament, and what do we find her doing, waiting to be endued with power from on high, as she is praying with one accord with the other disciples, notice the disciples praying with her, no to her. This is the first and last time Mary is seen in the Book of Acts.

Some Catholic Quarters – Co-Redeemer / Church of Mary – Assumption / Pope Pius XII

In some quarters of the Catholic Church, there is a skewed theology concerning Mary. They do not see her as simply an especially blessed woman, but as a co-redemptress, and one with special access to the throne of God. In Jerusalem today, there is a Catholic Church called the Church of Mary, for many centuries it was thought to be the spot where Mary was buried. However, when the Catholics changed their theology and decided that Mary never died, but instead ascended into heaven, they permanently shut the doors of the Church of Mary (This doctrine was dogmatically and infallibly defined by Pope Pius XII on 1 November 1950 in his *Apostolic Constitution Munificentissimus Deus*).

Dear Friend / No Assumption, No Redeemer, No Favors / John 2:5 – Last Recorded Words

Dear friend, Mary did not supernaturally ascend into heaven, she is not a co-redeemer, she cannot gain favors for those who pray to her. In John 2:5, we find the last recorded words of Mary when she said to the servants at the marriage feast, "Whatever He [Jesus] saith unto you, do it." She didn't say, "Tell me your problem, and I'll take care of it." She said, "Whatever He saith unto you, that's what you need to do."

John 2:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come." ⁵His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it."

Mary in Midst of Disciples – Not Prominence / Most Blessed Woman - Honored

Mary is seen here in the midst of the disciples, but not in a place of prominence. She is the most blessed of all women—uniquely and singularly chosen by God to bring forth His Son. She is honored, indeed, but she does not have special pull or power with God, she does not have the place as mediator, or co-redemption with Jesus for the forgiveness of sin.

Luke 1:28 (NKJV) ²⁸And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

We are Talking Power / Principles and Pattern / Deviate – Lose Power / Change Taxes

We are talking power, the context of this chapter is power, and the principles and pattern for power are laid out before us, and to deviate in any way from these principles and patterns will greatly diminish seizing and using the power available. Praying the rosary, I believe it is 10 to 2, ten repetitions to Mary, for every 2 repetitions to the Father (Jesus even taught against the vain repetitions) Am I saying a person who prays to Mary is not a Christian, not at all, but what I am saying is that person will miss out on the power available because they are outside the principles and the pattern; quite simply I am saying that a person who prays to Mary is not in accordance with the Scriptures, and essentially are wasting time and words, because the prayer request is to person who has not the ability to change anything. It would be the same of asking me to lower your taxes, when I have to pay taxes just like you, and have no representation power in the State Office to make such a change. It would just be words and time that had no hope of making a change.

Matthew 6:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ⁷And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Let's Not go to War / 100% Agreement Mary is Blessed / Fundamentalist / 1 Mediator

Now, let us not go to war over this with our Catholic friends, for it is a fact that Mary is favored amongst all woman, that is scripturally true; and when our Catholic friends say that we should agree with them, let them know we are in 100% agreement with them on the subject. I think for us Fundamentalist, we can go to such an extreme because we don't want to elevate Mary over Jesus that we can come off as sounding that we don't acknowledge or recognize Mary for how she is favored amongst all woman. We need to let our Catholic friends know we are in agreement with them over that matter; and as we talk about Mary we continually reiterate how blessed she is, but we say, most blessed yes, but not a co-redeemer, nor a co-mediator, and then we share the scriptures with them and prayerfully the Holy Spirit will give them eyes to see the difference. But we will never gain an audience with them if they think we are not in agreement with them that Mary was most blessed amongst woman. We must stay in perfect consistency with the Scriptures, and we take them to Luke and say absolutely she is most blessed; but then when need be, we take them to Matthew 6, we take them to 1 Timothy 2, and we stay consistent with the Scriptures.

1 Timothy 2:3-6 (NKJV) ³For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

And Brothers / Brothers Skeptics / Until Resurrection

Acts 1:14 ...and with his brothers - James and Jude—sons of Joseph and Mary and half brothers of Jesus—were in the Upper Room. This is interesting, because the Gospels make it clear that they had previously been cynical, skeptical unbelievers (John 7:5). What changed their minds about their Brother? His Resurrection. When James and Jude saw Jesus resurrected from the dead, they became believers in Him. James went on to write the Epistle of James; Jude, the Epistle of Jude. If anyone could have questioned the deity of Jesus Christ, it would have been His own brothers, yet here are James and Jude, numbered among the believers. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that is available to us today, and that power will change our lives just as it changed the life of Jesus' half-brothers.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Power things going On / Nothing Else Mattered / The Principle of Upper Room

There are powerful things going on here in this Upper Room. Why was the Upper Room so powerful, because it was there that for these 120, nothing else mattered except Jesus. Jesus was the central theme, the only theme, and getting to Him, and Him getting to them is all that mattered to these 120. Thus is the powerful principle of the Power of the Upper Room, it isn't so much the duration, but the desire, that I am going to this place where there is only one thing that matters, and that is me getting to Jesus, and Jesus getting to me.

I Pray you Make your Way

I pray you make your way to the Upper Room today, and tomorrow, and the days thereafter.

The Power of the Word of God

Acts 1:15-26

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Jesus Ascends – Leaves no Plans / How long the Wait? / Worth the Wait! / Live Backwards

Jesus has told the disciples to go turn the world upside-down, but before going to do that, they need to wait to receive the power from on High, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Ten days may sound like a long time, I am not sure that the disciples were totally in understanding that the power would come on the Day of Pentecost, and that they only had to wait 10 days for this dynamic power, but what I strongly believe is that they counted it worth the wait, because they already had a foretaste of what the baptism of the Holy Spirit would mean to them, as Jesus had given them a glimpse of this power several months prior as He sent them forth in His Name; with that power that were able to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 10). It is always easier to wait for something when your mind is reminded of how blessed the thing you wait for is. I say it often, the key to living life is to live life backwards, live from heaven, backwards. If and when we do that, the pressures, the distractions, the lacking of the day, are all minimized because in the forefront of our mind is heaven, and we don't want to mess up or miss out on all the blessings that come with that promise. I believe that is where these 120 are (some were the original 70 Jesus had sent out), they know what is coming, and they are anxiously and actively waiting (as we will see today).

Luke 10:1 (NKJV) ¹*After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.*

Luke 10:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷*Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

Mark 6:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²*So they went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.*

6 Keys to Power / Turn World Upside Down – For 1 Purpose – God's Glory

They will have to wait 10 days to receive that promise, but as we studied last week they were growing in power as they waited for the power. We have been speaking of power in our past studies (as it is the major theme of this book) and we have already seen 5 powerful principles on how we can experience great power in our Christian Life, as we have seen what gave those early disciples power. Remind you, it were these men and woman who turned the world upside down. Today we will add still yet another key to power for the Christian life. I should add, that the power they received and exercised was for one thing and one thing only, for the glory of God, and so that is what it should be for us.

Acts 17:6 (NKJV) ⁶*But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too."*

6 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)

- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)

Matthias Chosen

(Acts 1:15 NKJV) And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said, (Acts 1:16 NKJV) "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

Judas a Guide

Judas was a guide that led the henchmen to Jesus. Woe to any man who leads others into sin and error.

Peter student of Prophecy / Absolutely certain Prophecy come to Pass

Notice that Peter was a student of prophecy. He said, "This Scripture must be fulfilled (referring to the OT Scriptures)." He was absolutely certain that prophecy would come to pass.

***Psalms 41:9 (NKJV)**⁹ Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me.*

***Psalms 55:12-14 (NKJV)**¹² For it is not an enemy who reproaches me;
Then I could bear it.
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me;
Then I could hide from him.*

¹³ *But it was you, a man my equal,
My companion and my acquaintance.*

¹⁴ *We took sweet counsel together,
And walked to the house of God in the throng.*

***Psalms 109:7-8 (NKJV)**⁷ When he is judged, let him be found guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.
⁸ Let his days be few,
And let another take his office.*

***Psalms 69:24-25 (NKJV)**²⁴ Pour out Your indignation upon them,
And let Your wrathful anger take hold of them.
²⁵ Let their dwelling place be desolate;
Let no one live in their tents.*

Peter Certain – So Am I

Peter was a student of prophecy. He said, "This Scripture must be fulfilled." He was absolutely certain that prophecy would come to pass. So am I with every prophecy that is yet future. I am positive the following will occur, just as we studied a few weeks back, we are blessed because we get to live in a time of actually witnessing visible evidence to things that seemed absolutely impossible 100 years ago.

- Rebirth of Israel (May 14th, 1948)
- The re-establishment of the Roman Empire (the European Union)
- Coming together of One World Religion (All roads lead to God)
- Coming together of the One World Currency (Mark of the Beast)

Ezk 36-37 / Ezk 38-39 / Absolutely Certain to Pass – Wish I believed that Personally

Ezekiel 36-37 is the rebirth of the Nation Israel, fulfilled May 14, 1948. Chapters 38-39 speak of a still yet future event where the nations of Russia, Iran, Turkey, Libya, and Ethiopia will come from the North with the intent to wipe Israel off the face of the map (and if that sound familiar to you it should because the President of Iran has repeatedly made those remarks). They will come, but with no help from the outside world (including the USA, Britain, or any others) Israel will withstand the attack as God will supernaturally protect them. Today it is 6 million Jews verse 300 million

Muslims, but the nation Israel continues to stand against all odds. What we see before our eyes is supernatural, it is Divine intervention, and there is no other way to explain it, even with the help the USA gives to Israel. I can read all the impossible odds every day in the paper, Nations with Nuclear capabilities, mass terrorist cells, but still say "it won't matter, Israel will stand, nothing will crush them because the Bible says so, and they must enter into the 7 year period described in Revelation – for they are the center of the whole 7 year period. I believe it, have no worries about it because the Bible says so; then one day the Lord spoke to me so clearly, He said Ray, "I wish you would believe all My promises to you the same way you believe My promises to Israel. Somehow, I differentiate the two, I for some reason doubt all the promises to me, while totally assured of the one to Israel. Same Word, same God, same assurance. How about you Christian, do you do the same, yea I hear the Word, but that's not how it is going to work for me, God does mighty works, but not in my life, I just seem to get enough to get by. Peter stands up and says the Scripture has to be fulfilled, so let it be. We need to claim the same, the resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead, will rise me over that thing that is keeping me down, for the Scripture has to be fulfilled (there is power in the Word).

- My God shall supply all my needs (not wants but needs), for the Scripture has to be fulfilled.
- Husbands love your wife, for the Scripture has to be fulfilled.
- And you shall receive power to be My witness, for the Scripture has to be fulfilled.

Beloved, the Scripture has to be fulfilled, believe it, and you will receive it. Not receive it, and then you'll believe it, for we walk by faith not by sight:

2 Corinthians 5:7 (NKJV) ⁷For we walk by faith, not by sight.

Peter student of Prophecy – But Believed Word Inspired / Run when Judge Bible

Acts 1:16 (b) - ... which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; - Not only was Peter a student of prophecy, but he believed in the divine inspiration of Scripture, saying it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through David. All Scripture is inspired (2 Timothy 3:16). It's God-breathed, gang. And if you ever get involved in a church or become part of a Bible study group where the teacher says, "Well now, we can't be sure if this verse or this section is inspired," I would encourage you to immediately stand up, walk out, and never go back. Why? Because once you start to say, "I'll decide which part of the Bible is inspired and which part isn't," you suddenly become the judge of the Bible rather than allowing the Bible to judge you. And it's amazing what verses we will cross out given the opportunity! I've often encouraged people to go through their Bibles and meditate on all the verses they don't have underlined. We have all the promises starred and all the blessings highlighted, while verses like, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12) are strangely unmarked!

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Peter attest Word Inspired & Infallible / When Person Believes that – Power will Follow

So based on that the Scripture were God breathed, and they must come to pass, Peter is attesting that the Scriptures are inspired and infallible, and when a person comes to the belief, then the Scriptures have life to them, will have meaning to them, and they will experience the power of the Word. But, not until they believe the Scriptures are God breathed, infallible, and that every last one of them must be fulfilled:

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

(Acts 1:16 NKJV) "Men and brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus;

(Acts 1:17 NKJV) "for he was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry."

(Acts 1:18 NKJV) (Now this man purchased a field with the wages of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out.

Judas the Guide

Again, woe to the man or woman that leads another into sin. Word of caution to those couples who lead another into sexual sin, or take a hit of this, or check this out, or we don't need to go there – but here. Broken pottery is their destiny if they refuse to repent.

Originally a Potter's Field / Useless Broken Pottery / Field used to bury Strangers

We know from Matthew 27:10 and Zechariah 11:13 that this field was originally a potter's field—the field outside the house of every potter wherein he would throw any of his marred creations that, because they had become hardened, could not be reshaped. Over the years, due to the accumulation of broken pottery, the potter's field would thus be useless for anything but a burial ground.

Zechariah 11:13 (NKJV) ¹³And the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter"—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.

Betrayal Money used to Purchase Field / Powerful Picture – Blood \$ Redeems Useless

Interestingly what happened to the money for which Jesus was betrayed? It was used to purchase a potter's field—a useless field full of broken pots and dead bodies. The picture to me is powerful: The blood money of Jesus—His work on the Cross—was spent to redeem useless vessels and lifeless bodies—us.

Falling Headlong – Contradiction? / Earthquake – Broken Rope / Weak Argument

Acts 1:18 (b) ...and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out - "Contradiction!" cry the skeptics. "Doesn't Matthew 27:5 say Judas hanged himself?" Judas did hang himself, then the rope broke, and he was disemboweled as he fell to the ground. Thus, rather than contradicting Matthew's account, Luke confirms it. Mind you, was going on a little while after Judas was hanging from that rope? Jesus was on the cross, and what happened when Jesus was on the cross, a great earthquake, so much so it shook the doors of the Temple open, so much so it shook the covers off the tombs in the cemetery, so much so I believe that it caused a tree branch (that was maybe partially rotted or dead) to break and cause Judas to fall, or the knot of the rope (that was maybe not tied tightly – mind you no mention Judas being a fisherman) and the vibrating of the earth and the tree cause the knot to shift and the rope to untie, and Judas' body came tumbling down. I am ever so amazed that a person would risk eternal life on an argument as weak as this one.

Matthew 27:5 (NKJV) ⁵Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Matthew 27:51 (NKJV) ⁵¹Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

(Acts 1:19 NKJV) And it became known to all those dwelling in Jerusalem; so that field is called in their own language, Akel Dama, that is, Field of Blood.)

Next time feel Useless, Broken, Hopeless – Remember Akel Dama / Washing of Word

The next time you feel like a cracked pot, the next time you feel useless, the next time you feel there's no hope for you, remember Acel-dama—the field of blood—for even the place where the traitor died was purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ. And may I remind you, if for some reason clay was hard to come by, a potter would take the old clay, place it in a vat of water, and over time the water would soften the hard clay and make it pliable and useable again. Christian, been feeling a little hard and brittle lately, get back to the vat, get soaking in the Word, and let it (watch it) soften your heart, for there is power in the Word:

Ephesians 5:26 (NKJV) ²⁶that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

(Acts 1:20 NKJV) "For it is written in the book of Psalms: 'Let his dwelling place be desolate, And let no one live in it'; and, 'Let another take his office.'

Peter Quotes OT / Peter not Ignorant – Spent time with Living Word

Making application to Judas, Peter quoted from Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8. This tells me Peter was no ignorant fisherman. He knew the Scriptures. And I strongly suspect Peter's knowledge of the written Word came from hanging out with the Living Word, Jesus Christ.

If Want to be Used – Know the Word

If you want to be used by the Lord, you have to know the Word. I'm not talking just about a pulpit ministry, I am talking about being used by God to minister to your spouse, your kids, your parents, your brothers and sisters. Peter was well-versed in the Scriptures, and he was greatly used by the Lord.

(Acts 1:21 NKJV) "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

(Acts 1:22 NKJV) "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

Debate who the 12th / Peter Jumped Gun? / (1.) Disciples filled with Holy Spirit

Now there are as many debates as there are stars in the sky of who should have been the 12th Apostle, and many a camps say that Peter jumped the gun on replacing Judas, and he was suppose to be waiting for the Holy Spirit, not replacing Judas, and that the disciples couldn't make a wise choice because they had yet to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. I think it important to point out, these disciples have been filled with the Holy Spirit, that happened on Resurrection Sunday

John 20:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹So Jesus said to them again, *"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*
²²And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Chronological Events of Jesus after the Crucifixion

- Resurrection Sunday – Woman come to Garden Tomb / Met by Angel
- Resurrection Sunday – Woman tell Peter and John of Jesus' Resurrection
- Resurrection Sunday – Peter and John run to the Empty Tomb
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Mary Magdalene (and woman)
- Resurrection Sunday - Guards Bribed by Religious Leaders
- Resurrection Sunday – Mary Magdalene tells Disciples she saw Jesus
- Jesus appears to Peter
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus appears to the 2 on Road to Emmaus
- Resurrection Sunday – The 2 Return from Emmaus to Jerusalem
- Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (no Thomas) in Jerusalem – Receive the Holy Spirit (1st appearance to the Disciples)
- 8 days after Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (and Thomas) in Jerusalem (2nd appearance to the Disciples)
- Jesus did Many Other Things
- (at least 8 days after Resurrection) – Jesus appears to Disciples at Sea of Tiberias (also called Sea of Galilee) (3rd appearance to Disciples)
- Jesus asks Peter "Do you Love Me – Feed My Sheep"
- Jesus Predicts Peter's Death / Rumor that John would not Die
- Jesus did Many Other Things – World couldn't Contain (appears to the 500)
- 40 days after Resurrection – Jesus Ascends into Heaven
- (for 10 days after the Ascension) the Disciples wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit
- 50 Days after the Resurrection – The day of Pentecost - The Disciples Baptized with the Holy Spirit

Filled and (2.) - Been Praying / In 1 Accord / Jesus in their Midst

Not only are the disciples filled with the Holy Spirit, but they have been praying. They aren't having a business meeting, they are all in one accord (in unity) and as we studied last week,

prayer produces unity, and unity empowers prayer, and thus Jesus is in this prayer meeting just as He said He would be (for where two or three are gathered):

Matthew 18:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹*Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.* ²⁰*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*

Filled – Prayer – (3.) - the Word

Not only are they filled with the Holy Spirit, in the unity of prayer, they knew the Word, and what the Word said.

Side Note – on Criteria

Just a little side note, the same people who say Peter jumped the gun, are the same people who often use Peter's criteria here that an Apostle had to meet, and that was that the Apostle had to be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ. Thus they say that would be the Apostle Paul who had seen the resurrected Lord on the way to Damascus. Now if Peter was wrong in picking Matthais, then we would have to assume that he was wrong on his criteria that the replacing Apostle had to meet.

(Acts 1:23 NKJV) And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

(Acts 1:24 NKJV) And they prayed and said, "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

(Acts 1:25 NKJV) "to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place."

(Acts 1:26 NKJV) And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Knower of Hearts

Verse 24 - "You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all – I like the original Greek as it would read, "the knower of hearts" – God knows our hearts and wants to touch them all, for His love for you is fervent and passionate.

Casting Lots common in OT / Proverbs 16 / Jonah Illustration

So they cast lots, and the casting of lots was a common practice in Old Testament times (Proverbs 16:33). A specific example of an Old Testament character involved in the casting of lots is found in the Book of Jonah. Sailors on the boat cast lots to determine whose fault the storm was before they tossed him overboard (Jonah 1:7).

Proverbs 16:33 (NKJV) ³³ *The lot is cast into the lap, But its every decision is from the LORD.*

Urim and Thummin in Breastplate

Also, as we saw in our study in Exodus that if a person wanted to know God's will, he would go to the high priest who had the Urim and the Thummim in his breastplate. The Urim and the Thummim were possibly two stones, one black and one white. When asked a question, the high priest would offer a prayer and then pull out a stone, perhaps black meaning "No" and white meaning "Go."

Exodus 28:30 (NKJV) ³⁰*And you shall put in the breastplate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be over Aaron's heart when he goes in before the LORD. So Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel over his heart before the LORD continually.*

People still cast Lots – Put out Fleeces / Last Lot in NT – Acts 13

People today still think that casting lots is a nifty idea. Borrowing an idiom from the account of Gideon in Judges 6, they call it "setting out a fleece" (see Judges 6:36–40). But that's not the way of the New Testament. When Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for ministry in Acts 13, it was not through the casting of lots, but through the voice of the Spirit. This is the last time we will read of the casting of lots in the NT. Next time you have a decision to make, or a struggle within, I would highly encourage you to pray through and align yourself with these 7 points:

Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV) ²As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Hebrews 1 – God speaks to Us through Jesus / No need for Fleeces

Hebrews 1, God now speaks to us through His Son Jesus Christ, the Word that became flesh. Christian we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we have God speaking to us, we need not put out fleeces, nor give multiple choices, we need to wait on the Lord, open a dialogue with Him, where we are both speaking and listening. Hey, why talk to a fleece when you can talk to the Lord.

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV) ¹God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ²has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Acts 13 – Spirit will Separate / No Multiple Choices – No more Fleeces / Only Ear to Hear

In Chapter 13, the Spirit will say separate Paul and Barnabas for the ministry I have for them. No more multiple choices, they are listening to the Spirit, they have ears to hear, and they no longer need fleeces or lots, but only the ear to hear what He is saying to them to lead and to guide them.

This NT Theology – God will Honor / Write will in our Heart /

God will indeed honor such prayer and seeking and will fulfill His promise to "write His will upon the table of your heart" (see Hebrews 8:10). Hebrews 8:10 is NT theology, and you will be sure that you are in the will of God.

Hebrews 8:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Need not Struggle / 7 Points to Consider

You need not struggle and strive with the leading of the Lord, for He desires to lead you. So in your decisions, large or small, think of these 3 groups, ask yourself these 7 questions:

- **Major Point 1** when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this effect my relationship and service to the Lord?"
- **Major Point 2** when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"
- **Major Point 3** when considering your decision ask yourself, "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"
- **Major Point 4** when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"
- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, "does it align with the Word?"
- **Major Point 6** when considering your decision ask the Lord, "please give me a Word to stand on?"
- **Major Point 7** when considering your decision ask yourself, "what does godly counsel say?"

This NT Theology – God will Honor / Write will in our Heart / Afraid of Answer

God will indeed honor such prayer and seeking and will fulfill His promise to "write His will upon the table of your heart" (see Hebrews 8:10). Hebrews 8:10 is NT theology, and you will be sure that you are in the will of God. It amazes me how reluctant we are to do these things, and so often find ourselves in places and positions we shouldn't be. I think one of the main reasons we don't want to pray through these 7 points is because we really don't want to know the answer, because we have already determined that is what we want, and are fearful that God may not concur, So we jump in, and say now bless it Lord; and sadly we often find out, God doesn't bless it, and now we are in quite a mess.

Notice – Narrow it down for God / Pick One Lord

Notice also what they did, and we so often do, almighty Lord here are the 2 choices, which one do you think. We did the heavy work for ya, we narrowed it down to 2 choices, so all you have to do is pick 1. How often we can do this, we give God a multiple choice question, because pretty

being a missionary to Ethiopia, and dying a violent death for his witness (whether that be true is a matter of speculation).

(Acts 6:2 NKJV) Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

What if Wrong / Power Illustration / No Man, Gov't, Program Stop God

Now what if they were wrong, then we see a powerful demonstration of a Biblical Truth, if mere men were wrong, it didn't stop what God wanted to do with the Apostle Paul. Paul was going to be used by God, period! And here is a powerful Biblical truth for you Christian, no man, government, or program can stop the work of God in your life, only you can by your refusal to yield to Him. But if you yield your life to Him, doesn't matter what wrong man will do you, God will raise you up over them to fulfill His purpose and plan in your life.

Invest in 7 Points – Be a Matthias – Go for IT / Think Matthias heard the Challenge

Christian, when it is decision time, invest in those 7 and if you feel the Lord has spoken to you, confirmed it, then be a Matthias and go for it. Tell if you don't think Matthias continually lived in the shadows of doubt by others (as he does today); well Matthias we aren't sure if you really should be the 12th Apostle, Peter may have jumped the gun. Acts 6 he will not be living in doubt, he will be preaching with the eleven. Church history says he went on to preach in Ethiopia too. You can't go on living in doubt, if you have prayed and believe God has spoken, then step out and go for it and don't look back. War will come, either from outside or within (your own doubts) but you go back to that day when God spoke, and said I am standing on that word, I am confident it was He that spoke and I will not waver or fail in this time and season.

Baby Esa

Could I ever give this church a better example of this than baby Esa. For those reading this baby Esa is at St. Jude's hospital right now receiving treatment for cancer that is in her eyes. Her mom and dad were worship leaders here only a little over 6 months ago. Blair here daddy felt the call of the Lord to go to the worship college there in Memphis, he felt sure that is what the Lord wanted for them. As we would talk about the decisions for the months (actually years), I would continually ask him, 6 of the 7 are sure, but how about that word from the Lord (what has he said), and I would never ask more except that one. I said seek Him, for the war will come, it is a guarantee when a person steps out in faith, and when the war comes grab that word and stand on it, never wavering, for the word has power and that power will give you strength in the times of war. When it was down to the final time to make it for the semester start or not, Blair said they were going, I asked what word did the Lord give you, and He said "The Lord will Provide", I said then go and never forget that word. Amazingly we thought the primary reason for going was Bible College, but only a few short month later, Esa would be diagnosed with cancer, and the number 1 treatment center in the whole world would only be miles from their home (St. Judes Hospital). The cost? Free. The Lord will provide!

Scripture must be Fulfilled – Certain of It / I Like the Debate / Who will fill the Vacancy

Peter said the Scripture must be fulfilled, he was absolutely certain of it, and Peter and these disciples knew there is power in the Word. I like the debate in that there is a question of who will take his place, and I like the fact that question is still at debate 2000 years later, for I believe the question is still for today, and it is before you today, Who will take his place, who will represent the Lord. That is the question that the Lord will ask everyone here present today, there is a spot, and opening, for someone to fill, to take the place of representing Me, who will fill it? Will it be you? Believe the Word, and then you will receive it's power, just as these disciples did.

Easter Sunday 2008

Acts 1:9 & Leviticus 14:1-9

Jesus has ascended!

Happy Easter – Christ is Risen, He is Alive, He Lives, He Lives!

HE LIVES - by A. H. Ackley

I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today.
I know that He is living, whatever men may say.
I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Video - Amazed

Introduction

Acts 1:9 (NKJV) ⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

I am Amazed / What Love / He is Risen & Alive

I am amazed, what a One we call Papa, Father, Lover of my soul, the one who calls us son, daughter, My Beloved. He is the risen Lord, He is alive,

Out Text Today – Beautiful Picture of Death & Resurrection / 1500 Prior

Our text today is Leviticus 14 and what we will see is verses 1 through 7 paint a perfect picture of the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ 1,500 years before the event took place. Verses 8-9 speak so beautifully of our forgiveness, and cleansing from sin, our new life, and why we celebrate Resurrection Sunday (most commonly called Easter Sunday, but we celebrate it at it's height – the resurrected and ascended Lord!).

Easter Message

Our Text – Beautiful Easter Story

our text today is Leviticus 14 and what we will see is verses 1 through 7 paint a perfect picture of the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ 1,500 years before the event took place. Verses 8-9 speak so beautifully of our forgiveness, and cleansing from sin, and why we celebrate Resurrection Sunday (most commonly called Easter Sunday, but we celebrate it at it's height – the resurrected and ascended Lord!).

Leviticus 14:1 (NKJV) ¹Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

Leviticus 14:2 (NKJV) ²"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.

Leviticus 14:3 (NKJV) ³And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper,

Leviticus 14:4 (NKJV) ⁴then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.

Leviticus 14:5 (NKJV) ⁵And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water.

Leviticus 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet

and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was* killed over the running water.

Leviticus 14:7 (NKJV) ⁷And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Leviticus 14:8 (NKJV) ⁸He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.

Leviticus 14:9 (NKJV) ⁹But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

A Horrible Disease / Leprosy a Picture of Sin / Lev 13 – Begins under Skin / Talmud 61

Leprosy, a most horrible disease, an incurable disease at the time of this writing, and in the days of Jesus. Leprosy would start as a bump beneath the skin and then eventually rise to the surface and eat the body until ultimately death would come. In the Scriptures leprosy is a picture of sin (Isaiah 1:5-6, Leviticus 13). Leviticus 13 gives a detail account of how leprosy spreads through a person's body. Leprosy begins beneath the surface of the skin—just as sin does. What you see outwardly in people's lives is only the result of what is going on within them. We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we're sinners. Leviticus 13 goes on to say that leprosy, like sin, spreads throughout the body. Like sin, one could control it for a season. But if he didn't destroy it, it would eventually destroy him. The Talmud taught that leprosy was second only to death in its list of sixty-one defilements. He who had leprosy was as good as dead because his disease would separate him from the rest of the community. When a person contracted leprosy, he was forced to live only with fellow lepers. If he had to come to the city, the Law required him to cry out, "Unclean, unclean," in order for everyone within a one hundred fifty-foot radius to back away and clear the area. In the beginning stages, the skin of a leper would take on a hard, glossy appearance. As it progressed, it caused his nerves to become numb, which in turn led to the loss of fingers and toes. What a picture of what sin does to us; it is glossy at first, but then it hardens us, deadens us, and eventually numbs us, then it starts to take life away.

(Isaiah 1:5 NKJV) Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints.

(Isaiah 1:6 NKJV) From the sole of the foot even to the head, There is no soundness in it, But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; They have not been closed or bound up, Or soothed with ointment.

Fitting 1st Miracle

I think it fitting that the first miracle recorded in the New Testament deals with the cleansing of a leper because. How divinely inspired, that immediately after the Sermon on the Mount a leper is healed, because after reading the Sermon on the Mount, there are none clean, we all feel stricken by sin, lepers if you will, who need to be touched by God:

Galatians 3:24 (NKJV) ²⁴Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Matthew 8:1-3 (NKJV) ¹When He had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. ²And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean." ³Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "***I am willing; be cleansed.***" Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

V. 2-3

Leviticus 14:2 (NKJV) ²"This shall be the law of the leper for the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought to the priest.

Leviticus 14:3 (NKJV) ³And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper,

Law on the Books for 1500yrs

The law was on the books, but for 1500 years no one was coming to the priest because no one was being cleansed and healed.

Met Outside the Camp

The leper was to be brought to the priest outside of the camp. So, too, when we were out of it—when we were in isolation, left for dead, when there was no hope—Jesus met us where we were, outside the camp.

V. 3-4

Leviticus 14:3 (NKJV) ³And the priest shall go out of the camp, and the priest shall examine *him*; and indeed, *if* the leprosy is healed in the leper,

Leviticus 14:4 (NKJV) ⁴then the priest shall command to take for him who is to be cleansed two living *and* clean birds, cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop.

2 Birds – Sparrows – Insignificant / Jesus humbled Self – Father aware every Move

These two birds would be either turtledoves or sparrows. There is no more insignificant a bird than a sparrow. Yet when even a sparrow falls to the ground, the Father takes notice (Matthew 10:29). In their insignificance, these sparrows speak of Jesus, who humbled Himself and assumed the frailty of humanity. Yet the Father's care and awareness of their every move speaks of the depth of His love for His only begotten Son.

Matthew 10:29 (NKJV) ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

Wood – Cross / Scarlet – Blood / Hyssop – Doorpost – Sacrifice / Jesus on Cross

Verse 4... and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop - Wood in Scripture speaks of the wood of the Cross, and scarlet of blood. Hyssop was the little bush with which the Israelites applied blood on the doorposts of their homes during Passover. It was also the stalk to which a sponge was attached containing a drink refused by Jesus on the Cross (John 19:29), for He took the full-on wrath of God's judgment. Thus, hyssop speaks of sacrifice.

John 19:29 (NKJV) ²⁹Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on hyssop, and put it to His mouth.

V. 5

Leviticus 14:5 (NKJV) ⁵And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water.

Jesus became an Earthen Vessel

The sparrow's neck would be wrung by the priest, and then a knife slid along its neck to allow the blood to flow. Jesus would become an earthen vessel just like us (2 Corinthians 4:7). He would die an earthen vessel as well. Jesus became like you, like me, as He humbled Himself and became man. He is a God that we can fully relate to.

2 Corinthians 4:7 (NKJV) ⁷But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.

All this Points to the Cross / Made a Sacrifice – to Pronounce us Clean / Welcome In

The wood, the blood, the earthen vessel, the innocent sparrow – all point to a yet future event; The Holy One of Israel would humble Himself, become man, take the wood upon His back and be made a sacrifice so that you and I (lepers) would be pronounced cleaned – welcome back into the family.

Over Running Water – Word & Spirit / No Accident – Exactly as Word Said it Would Be

Verse 5... *over running water* - Scripturally, water speaks not only of the Word, but of the Spirit. Thus, the bird was to be killed in the earthen vessel over running water because Jesus would die according to the prophecies of the Scripture that were inspired by the Spirit. When the Sparrow of our salvation died, as His side was pierced and blood and water poured forth, it was neither accident nor random tragedy. Rather, it was all part of prophecy, a preordained plan of God which the Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to record over a century before it would take place.

John 7:38-39 (NKJV) ³⁸He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

³⁹But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

John 19:33-34 (NKJV) ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs.
³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.

Jesus the Innocent Sparrow / For Us

Jesus Christ the innocent sparrow sent by the Father to provide the sacrifice to cleanse us from our leprosy. For God so loved the world that He gave!

John 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

V. 6-7

Leviticus 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶As for the living bird, he shall take it, the cedar wood and the scarlet and the hyssop, and dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird *that was killed over the running water.*

Leviticus 14:7 (NKJV) ⁷And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Sprinkle 7 Times / Same as in Temple High Priest / # Completion / Cleansing Complete

The priest was to sprinkle the blood upon the healed leper 7 times. The High Priest would sprinkle the blood 7 times in the Holy Place in the Temple, the High Priest would sprinkle the blood of the sparrow 7 times upon the leper. Seven times is significant in that it is the number of completion, and the Lord is saying – the cleansing is complete, you are clean by this shed blood.

Leviticus 4:6 (NKJV) ⁶The priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times before the LORD, in front of the veil of the sanctuary.

7 Places

How, amazing, that on the cross, 6 hours that one Friday on a hill in Palestine 2000 years ago, the King of the Universe bled for you, and He bled for me. Jesus bled His precious blood from 7 places that Day as we learn from the Scriptures.

- He bled from His face (as they buffeted Him),
- He bled from His beard (as they plucked His beard – Isaiah 50:6),
- He bled from His back as the whip embedded with bits of broken bone and pottery shredded
- He bled from His forehead (as they pressed the crown of one-and-a-half inch thorns upon His head).
- He bled from His hands, (as they drove the nails into His body)
- He bled from His feet, (as they drove the nails into His body,)
- He bled from His side, (as they would thrust that spear into Him).

Complete Forgiveness / Complete Healing – Complete Victory

Seven in the Scriptures represents completeness (7 days in a week, 7 days of Creation, 7 notes in a music scale) Seven times Jesus' blood flowed, providing complete forgiveness for my sin, complete healing, and complete victory over the Enemy....

7 Significance

That very same blood is sprinkled upon us, and the High Priest Jesus Christ says to you today, the cleansing is complete, you are clean by the this shed blood.

- Our forehead, you may say oh but you don't know the horrible thoughts that I have, the things The heavenly Sparrow says My blood has erased the hard drive memory, you are made clean.
- Our face, you may say oh but you don't know the things I have allowed myself to see. Our High Priest says I will give you heavenly Vision..
- Our back, you may say but I have turned my back on you multiple times, walked away from You – Jesus the Lamb of God says I got your back covered, I have covered with My never-ending love and acceptance.

- Our feet, I've gone places I shouldn't have gone. Jesus would say follow-Me, we will walk together.
- Our hands, I've handled things I shouldn't have touched, Jesus says touch the holes in My hands, the only thing that can go through my hands are nails, nothing else, for I hold you in the palm of My hand.
- Our side, you don't know gunk and junk that is within me, and our Lord says purged, cleaned from the inside out.
- The Beard, our sin, affects the way people look at me. Our Beloved says, you are the apple of My eyes, the Heavenly Father says oh so much like the Son.

Complete Forgiveness / Complete Healing / It is Finished

Seven in the Scriptures represents completeness (7 days in a week, 7 days of Creation, 7 notes in a music scale) Seven times Jesus' blood flowed, providing complete forgiveness for my sin, complete healing, and complete victory over the Enemy....

It is Finished! Jesus would say with His last breath. The final Sacrifice has been made.

Oh the Blood of Jesus

Oh the blood of Jesus, we are cleansed and forgiven.

Contemplate these Words – Prepare Heart for Communion

Contemplate these words as we prepare our hearts for communion.

Communion Service

Leviticus 14:7 (NKJV) ⁷And he shall sprinkle it seven times on him who is to be cleansed from the leprosy, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose in the open field.

Remaining Bird – Dipped / 1 Depicts Death – 2 Depicts Resurrection & Ascension / Throne

Verse 7 - The remaining bird would be dipped in the blood, the first blood shed. Why? One bird would depict the death of our Savior, our Redeemer. But the story doesn't end there. He ascended to heaven. He rose again. So a second bird was needed to complete the illustration. After being dipped in the blood of the first bird, the second bird was allowed to fly away free. After Jesus died on the Cross, the Book of Hebrews tells us He took His blood into heaven and sprinkled it in the sanctuary of heaven (Hebrews 9). Thus, the analogy is perfect.

Hebrews 9:23-24 (NKJV) ²³Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

1.) Validates Substitution Accepted

The Resurrection is the hinge on which the door of our faith swings for if there was no

Resurrection, Paul was right: we are of all men most miserable (1 Corinthians 15:19).

The Resurrection is essential because it provides proof to us. "Show us a sign to validate Your claims," Jesus' contemporaries demanded. "Destroy this body and in three days, I'll rise again," Jesus answered. And indeed that continues to be the sign that sets Him apart from all others.

John 2:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

2.) He is Present

Secondly, the Resurrection tells us He's present with us. On that first Easter Sunday, His followers weren't rejoicing in theological implications or dispensational ramifications but simply in the fact that their Friend—the One who had calmed the storm and fed them, the One who had healed and loved them—was with them once again. And the same is true for every believer. What storm is raging around you today? What leprosy is nibbling at you? What problem is pressing down heavily on your soul? You can cast all those cares upon Jesus, for He's with you even now.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

3.) Jesus is Praying for Us

Finally, the Resurrection reminds us that He's praying for us. Jesus ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Therefore, if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1). How does He win His case? Revelation 12:11 tells us the accuser of our souls is overcome by the blood. That's why, in our text, the leper was sprinkled seven times, for seven is the number of perfection, of completion.

Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV) ²⁵Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

1 John 2:1 (NKJV) ¹My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

Revelation 12:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. ¹¹And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Sparrow Left the Heavenly Nest – Lodge in Tree called Calvary / Sprinkled Blood / Boldly

The Sparrow of our salvation left His nest in heaven to lodge in a tree called Calvary, to die in place of you and me. But the story doesn't end there. Because He took His blood into heaven to cleanse each of us, we can come boldly before God no matter how inadequate, how unworthy, how leprous we feel (Hebrews 4:16).

Hebrews 4:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Communion - Take the Bread / Sparrow that was Brokne

Will you join me in the breaking of the bread, the Heavenly Sparrow that was broken:

1 Corinthians 11:23-24 (NKJV) ²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "**Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.**"

Leviticus 14:8 (NKJV) ⁸He who is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean. After that he shall come into the camp, and shall stay outside his tent seven days.

Leviticus 14:9 (NKJV) ⁹But on the seventh day he shall shave all the hair off his head and his beard and his eyebrows—all his hair he shall shave off. He shall wash his clothes and wash his body in water, and he shall be clean.

Picture of New Born Baby / Unless a Man Born Again

Just as the leper was to be washed and shaved twice, thereby taking on the appearance of a newborn babe. Through the blood we are born again, made as new born babes. Jesus said unless a man be born-again he can not enter the kingdom. We have been born again through the precious blood of Christ:

John 3:3 (NKJV) ³Jesus answered and said to him, "**Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

Communion – Take the Cup / Sparrow's Blood / Receive the Sprinkling

Will you join me in the partaking of the cup, the Heavenly Sparrows blood that was poured out for us. Receive the sprinkling of the blood, hear the High Priest say – Cleansed and Forgiven.

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.**" ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

Acts 1:9 (NKJV) ⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

HE LIVES - by A. H. Ackley

In all the world around me I see His loving care,
And tho' my heart grows weary, I never will despair;
I know that He is leading, thru all the stormy blast,
The day of His appearing will come at last.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Rejoice, rejoice, O Christian, lift up your voice and sing,
Eternal hallelujahs to Jesus Christ the King!
The hope of all who seek Him, the help of all who find,
None other is so loving, so good and kind.

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!
You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart.

Supplemental Notes

Chronological Events of Jesus after the Crucifixion

1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NKJV) ¹Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

1.) Resurrection Sunday – Woman come to Garden Tomb / Met by Angel

John 20:1 (NKJV) ¹Now **the first day of the week** Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw *that* the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Matthew 28:1-7 (NKJV) ¹Now after the Sabbath, **as the first day of the week began** to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ²And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*. ⁵But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, **and indeed He is going before you into Galilee**; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.”

Mark 16:1-7 (NKJV) ¹Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. ²Very early in the morning, **on the first day of the week**, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. ³And they said among themselves, “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” ⁴But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. ⁵And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. ⁶But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. ⁷But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that **He is going before you into Galilee**; there you will see Him, as He said to you.”

Luke 24:1-8 (NKJV) ¹Now **on the first day of the week**, very early in the morning, they, and certain *other women* with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ²But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. ⁴And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. ⁵Then, as they were afraid and bowed *their* faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, ⁷saying, **‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’**” ⁸And they remembered His words.

2.) Resurrection Sunday – Woman tell Peter and John of Jesus’ Resurrection

John 20:2 (NKJV) ²Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.”

Luke 24:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary *the mother* of James, and the other *women* with them, who told these things to the apostles. ¹¹And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them.

3.) Resurrection Sunday – Peter and John run to the Empty Tomb

John 20:3-10 (NKJV) ³Peter therefore went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. ⁴So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. ⁵And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying *there*; yet he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, ⁷and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. ⁹For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰**Then the disciples went away again to their own homes.**

Luke 24:12 (NKJV) ¹²But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened.

4.) Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Mary Magdalene (and woman)

John 20:11-17 (NKJV) ¹¹But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down *and looked* into the tomb. ¹²And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. ¹³Then they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing *there*, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "**Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?**" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, "Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "**Mary!**" She turned and said to Him, "Rabboni!" (which is to say, Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "**Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'**"

Matthew 28:8-10 (NKJV) ⁸So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word. ⁹And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "**Rejoice!**" So they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰Then Jesus said to them, "**Do not be afraid. Go *and* tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.**"

Mark 16:8-9 (NKJV) ⁸So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. ⁹Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons.

5.) Resurrection Sunday - Guards Bribed by Religious Leaders

Matthew 28:11-15 (NKJV) ¹¹Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. ¹²When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, ¹³saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' ¹⁴And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." ¹⁵So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

6.) Resurrection Sunday – Mary Magdalene tells Disciples she saw Jesus

John 20:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and *that* He had spoken these things to her.

Mark 16:10-11 (NKJV) ⁸So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. ⁹Now when *He* rose early on the first *day* of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. ¹⁰She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. ¹¹And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe.

7.) Jesus appears to Peter

Somewhere in this mix Jesus appears to Peter, for the Disciples who return from Emmaus say so. Therefore it must have been sometime before these disciples returned from Emmaus to Jerusalem:

Luke 24:1-53 (NKJV) ³³So they rose up *that very hour* and returned to *Jerusalem*, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴saying, "**The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!**" ³⁵And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

See also: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 (NKJV)

8.) Resurrection Sunday – Jesus appears to the 2 on Road to Emmaus

Mark 16:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. ¹³And they went and told *it* to the rest, *but* they did not believe them either.

Luke 24:13-32 (NKJV) ¹³Now behold, two of them were traveling *that same day* to a village called Emmaus, which was seven miles from Jerusalem. ¹⁴And they talked together of all these things which had happened. ¹⁵So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶But their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him. ¹⁷And He said to them, "**What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?**" ¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, "Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?" ¹⁹And He said to them, "**What things?**" So they said to Him, "The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. ²¹But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, today is the third day since these things happened. ²²Yes, and certain women of our company, who arrived at the tomb early, astonished us. ²³When they did not find His body, they came saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said He was alive. ²⁴And certain of those *who were* with us went to the tomb and found *it* just as the women had said; but Him they did not see." ²⁵Then He said to them, "**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?**" ²⁷And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. ²⁸Then they drew near to the

village where they were going, and He indicated that He would have gone farther. ²⁹But they constrained Him, saying, "Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." And He went in to stay with them. ³⁰Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. ³²And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?"

9.) Resurrection Sunday – The 2 Return from Emmaus to Jerusalem

Luke 24:33-35 (NKJV) ³³So they rose up **that very hour** and returned to **Jerusalem**, and **found the eleven** and those *who were with them* gathered together, ³⁴saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, **and has appeared to Simon!**" ³⁵And they told about the things *that had happened* on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.

Note – the reference to "and found the eleven" causes an interpretation challenge for Thomas wasn't there. In John 20:10 it says that each went back to their own home, so this gathering could have been a "called" get together and Thomas refused to come. Or, Thomas may have come and left before Jesus appeared.

10.) Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (no Thomas) in Jerusalem – Receive the Holy Spirit (1st appearance to the Disciples)

John 20:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹Then, **the same day at evening, being the first day of the week**, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" ²⁰When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹So Jesus said to them again, "**Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.**" ²²And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.** ²³**If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**"

Luke 24:36-45 (NKJV) ³⁶Now as they said these things, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "**Peace to you.**" ³⁷But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. ³⁸And He said to them, "**Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts?** ³⁹**Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.**" ⁴⁰When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. ⁴¹But while they still did not believe for joy, and marveled, He said to them, "**Have you any food here?**" ⁴²So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. ⁴³And He took *it* and ate in their presence. ⁴⁴Then He said to them, "**These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.**" ⁴⁵And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.

This next Scripture passage is most likely part of this section, or section 11:

Mark 16:14-18 (NKJV) ¹⁴Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. ¹⁵And He said to them, "**Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.** ¹⁶**He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.** ¹⁷**And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; ¹⁸they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.**"

11.) 8 days after Resurrection Sunday – Jesus Appears before Disciples (and Thomas) in Jerusalem (2nd appearance to the Disciples)

John 20:24-29 (NKJV) ²⁴Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." ²⁶And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "**Peace to you!**" ²⁷Then He said to Thomas, "**Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.**" ²⁸And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "**Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**"

12.) Jesus did Many Other Things

John 20:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

13.) (at least 8 days after Resurrection) – Jesus appears to Disciples at Sea of Tiberias (also called Sea of Galilee) (3rd appearance to Disciples)

John 21:1-14 (NKJV) ¹After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed *Himself*: ²Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the *sons* of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples were together. ³Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are

going with you also.” They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. ⁴But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵Then Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any food?” They answered Him, “No.” ⁶And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. ⁷Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on *his* outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. ⁸But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. ⁹Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. ¹⁰Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have just caught.” ¹¹Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken. ¹²Jesus said to them, “Come and eat breakfast.” Yet none of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are You?”—knowing that it was the Lord. ¹³Jesus then came and took the bread and gave it to them, and likewise the fish. ¹⁴This is now the third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

14.) Jesus asks Peter “Do you Love Me – Feed My Sheep”

John 21:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” ¹⁶He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” ¹⁷He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.

15.) Jesus Predicts Peter’s Death / Rumor that John would not Die

John 21:18-23 (NKJV) ¹⁸Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” ¹⁹This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁰Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” ²¹Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?” ²²Jesus said to him, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” ²³Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?”

16.) Jesus did Many Other Things – World couldn’t Contain

John 21:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. ²⁵And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Note: Some of the other things included the following:

Being seen by the 500:

1 Corinthians 15:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostle

In obedience to Jesus’ instructions, the disciples make their way back to Galilee after the Passover feast (Mt 28:7, 10). Apparently, Jesus prearranges this meeting. As he has done so often before, he uses a mountain as a platform for delivering lofty truths to his disciples (Mt 4:8; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 24:3; 26:30). When they see Jesus, there is a mixed response. Some worship, while others doubt. If we are only talking about the Eleven, then it seems odd that they would have doubted since they had already seen him twice in Jerusalem and some of them had seen him a third time when they went fishing. However, the words “but some” [hoi de] seem to indicate a group of disciples distinct from the Eleven. It would be natural for large crowds to follow the Apostles when they returned to Galilee. It was their home territory and they had been away for the better part of nine months. Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians 15:6, “After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time.” That may, in fact, be this very instance.

Matthew 28:16-20 (NKJV) ¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. ¹⁷When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

17.) for 10 days after the Ascension the Disciples wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit

Luke 24:46-49 (NKJV) ⁴⁶Then He said to them, “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸And you are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”

Acts 1:4-8 (NKJV) ⁴And being assembled together with *them*, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “*which,*” *He said,* “*you have heard from Me;* ⁵*for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*” ⁶Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷And He said to them, “*It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.*” ⁸*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*

Note: Although the above passage in Luke looks like it was all spoken at the same time (on Resurrection Sunday), Luke is probably piecing all the events together into one writing, and not necessarily into chronological order. Reason being, is that on Resurrection Sunday Jesus had told His disciples to go to Galilee to meet Him, and telling them to wait in Jerusalem for the Power would be a contradiction. Luke wrote both Luke and Acts, and notice how the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts have both the same writing style of lumping events all together into 1 writing.

18.) 40 days after Resurrection – Jesus Ascends into Heaven

Mark 16:1-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Luke 24:50-53 (NKJV) ⁵⁰And *He led them out as far as Bethany*, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. ⁵¹Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. ⁵²And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen.

Acts 1:1-3 (NKJV) ¹The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, ²until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, ³to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, *being seen by them during forty days* and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

Acts 1:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, ¹¹who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This *same* Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

19.) 50 Days after the Resurrection – The Disciples Baptized with the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:1-4 (NKJV) ¹When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. ²And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and *one* sat upon each of them. ⁴And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Chapter 2

The Day of Pentecost – 2:1-13

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Jesus Ascends – Says to Wait / Acts 2 – Fulfillment of 3rd Key

Jesus has ascended; He has told the disciples to wait for the baptism from on high, for they will need the power to turn the world upside-down. In chapter 1 we have seen and studied 6 Keys to the early church disciples power, and today we will see the literal fulfillment of the third key, "baptism of the Holy Spirit", here on the Day of Pentecost.

6 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)

Many Christians say – Yeah but not for Me

Now for many a Christians when you talk about spiritual gifts, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, they say sounds great and great stories to read and hear about, but I don't see them happening in my life, and the majority of days I feel totally powerless, I feel anything but endowed with God's power. I beseech you today, to stay tuned-in, for my hope before this sermon ends is that you will know and believe the power is available for you, and that the power is easier to receive than we have allowed ourselves to believe that it is, and that we will see that every good gift and perfect gift comes from above.....and our heavenly Father gives us gifts as He see best to give:

James 1:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶*Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.* ¹⁷*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.*

Bill Bright / Sheep Ranch

Dr. Bill Bright of Campus Crusade for Christ tells this story of a famous oil field called Yates Pool: *During the depression this field was a sheep ranch owned by a man named Yates. Mr. Yates wasn't able to make enough on his ranching operation to pay the principal and interest on the mortgage, so he was in danger of losing his ranch. With little money for clothes or food, his family (like many others) had to live on government subsidy. Day after day, as he grazed his sheep over those rolling West Texas hills, he was no doubt greatly troubled about how he would pay his bills. Then a seismographic crew from an oil company came into the area and told him there might be oil on his land. They asked permission to drill a wildcat well, and he signed a lease contract. At 1,115 feet they struck a huge oil reserve. The first well came in at 80,000 barrels a day. Many subsequent wells were more than twice as large. In fact, 30 years after the discovery, a government test of one of the wells showed it still had the potential flow of 125,000 barrels of oil a day. And Mr. Yates owned it all. The day he purchased the land he had received the oil and mineral rights. Yet, he'd been living on relief. A multimillionaire living in poverty. The problem? He didn't know the oil was there even though he owned it.*

Many Christians – Spiritual Poverty

Many Christians live in spiritual poverty. They are entitled to the gifts of the Holy Spirit and his energizing power, but they are not aware of their birthright.

Civil war gun 23,000

I recently read a news article about a very desperate man, so desperate that he held up a convenience store and getting away with a mere 125 dollars. He used a handgun in the robbery which added to his sentence. He used a gun that had been in the family for generations, it wasn't loaded when committing the crime because they don't make bullets for the gun anymore; it was a gun from the Civil War, a collector's item, it's value? 23,000. He was carrying 23K and never knew it. Could that be the picture of us?

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:1 NKJV) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

120 in the Upper Room – Where the 1,000's / Fit Jesus In – Or Fit into Jesus'

There were 120 in this room we are told in verse 15 of chapter 1. I wonder where the thousands upon thousands were that Christ had healed, had fed, had comforted, I wonder where they are and why they aren't in this upper room. We think super-saints and magical moments back then, but the fact that there are only 120 out of the 500 that had seen His resurrection, and that fact that there are only 120 out of the 1,000's that He had touched during His earthly ministry tells me that things were not that different back then, as they are now. The majority of people fit Jesus into their schedule, not fit themselves into Jesus' schedule. But, Christian, for us today, we see another amazing thing, and that is that for those that did fit themselves into Jesus' schedule, God meets them in mighty ways.....and, what He can do with such small percentages, He need not wait for 80% turnout or participation before He can move mightily, here we see only a 25% turnout (120 out of the 500 eyewitness) and God will start a move of the Spirit that will burn across the whole world.

(Acts 1:15 NKJV) And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said,

1 Corinthians 15:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostle

120 have seen Lots (Healings, Touchings, Teachings) / But told to Wait

These 120 have seen a lot. They have seen the healings, the touching, some no doubt recipients of healing personally. They have touched Him, they have heard Him, they have walked with them, they have seen Him raise from the dead, they watched Him ascend into heaven, and the Lord would still say wait – not yet.

Going to Need Power – Not Easy / What Teach – Against all Human Reasoning

You are going to need this power, because things won't be easy. What you are going to do will go against all human-reasoning. You are going to tell people about someone rising from the dead. You are going to tell people there is life after death. And, you are going to tell people they need to deny their immediate fleshly wants, and to seek after the things of the Lord. You will need power to do such things, for what you are going to tell people is revolutionary, and for some, it will be as if you are starting a revolution.

Some Churches Today – Gifts then, Not Now / Where do they Live? / Pasadena Needs It

There are churches today who say the things of the Spirit spoken of here in Acts 2, and 1 Corinthians 12-14, were for then, not now. It was a period (a dispensation is the theological term) that was just to get the Church going, but are no longer needed or available today. I disagree with the later (still available) because the prior (the need) is still needed. I'm not exactly sure where those people live, or where they work, but I sure wouldn't mind moving there, for I tell the place I live and the place I work, sure is still in need, in need of the Risen Savior, in need of a change in their life, in their marriage, and I need all the help I can get (all the Power available) to reach them with the life-changing message of the Gospel.

Love to go Live There / 3 months they'll Need the Power

I would love to find out where they live, I want to find those Pastors and churches, and I want to move there. I should do that, because after I lived there for 3 months and went to their church for 3 months, after having to fellowship with me for 3 months they would quickly see the need for the power spoken of here in Acts 2.

Where is this Upper Room? / Where 1,000's can Hear / Jesus walked – Soon / Gal 6

Where exactly is this upper room nobody knows, but obviously they are somewhere where thousands of people could hear. Most likely they were somewhere close to the Temple precinct for that many people to hear (and gather!). Regardless of where they were, it was probably a place where Jesus had walked, and as He did Jesus would think in His mind, it won't be long until the Spirit will move and touch thousands. Christian don't grow weary of doing good, for in due time fruit will come.

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) ⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.

The Day of Pentecost

Pentecost 1 of 7 / Mandatory – so Same People as Passover / Heard of Jesus Crucifixion

Verse 1 - When the Day of Pentecost had fully come – The Feast of Pentecost was one of the 7 Jewish Feasts (read of them in Leviticus 23). Pentecost was a celebration. Taking place in the early spring, fifty days after Passover, it celebrated the completion of the winter harvest. It was one of the three mandatory Feasts that every able Jewish male was to attend. Many, who were here at this Feast, would have been here for the Passover Feast because it was a mandatory Feast also (the Feast of Tabernacle in the Fall was the 3rd mandatory Feast). We know from the Road to Emmaus that the crucifixion of Jesus was known to all (as they said are you the only one in Jerusalem who didn't here this), it wasn't some obscure event, everyone knew about it, Paul even said that these things were done openly and everyone knew about them, including King Agrippa (Acts 26:26), so the crucifixion of Jesus was no obscure event, all the region and visitors knew the story – that means millions!

Luke 24:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷And He said to them, *“What kind of conversation is this that you have with one another as you walk and are sad?”* ¹⁸Then the one whose name was Cleopas answered and said to Him, *“Are You the only stranger in Jerusalem, and have You not known the things which happened there in these days?”*

Acts 26:26 (NKJV) ²⁶For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

Pente = 50 / 7 Sabbaths plus 1 / All just a Shadow

Pentecost was 50 days after Feast of Firstfruits (pente means 50), Leviticus 23 says 7 Sabbaths plus 1 day after the Feast of Firstfruits (which was the day after a Sabbath itself), so 49 plus 1 equals 50. Now Hebrews tells us that these Feasts were all just shadows of things to come.

Leviticus 23:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ¹⁶Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

Hebrews 8:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; ⁵who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, *“See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”* ⁶But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

Hebrews 10:1 (NKJV) ¹For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

Recap the 7 Feasts

Lets do a recap on these 7 Feasts so we can fully glean the prophetic picture we are see here in Acts 2. THE 7 FEASTS OF ISRAEL

THE SPRING FEASTS

1. THE PASSOVER –
2. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

3. THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS
THE SUMMER FEAST
4. THE FEAST OF PENTECOST
THE FALL FEASTS OF ISRAEL
5. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS
6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

1. THE PASSOVER (Spring Feast)

The Passover was instituted to celebrate the angel of death passing over all whose house was covered with the blood of the lamb. It was the final blow to Pharaoh to let the children of Israel leave the bondage of slavery. We have studied in-depth of Jesus fulfilling the Passover Feast as He became the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). In the Jewish calendar Passover was to be on the 14th of Nissan (Nissan was the 1st month in the Jewish calendar).

John 1:29 (NKJV) ²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

2. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD (Spring Feast)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread began the day after the Passover (the 15th of Nissan) and it lasted 7 days and it was the celebration of the Children of Israel exiting Egypt in such a hurry their bread didn't have time to rise (leaven is used to rise bread as leaven literal decays it releases a gas that raises the dough). Jesus would not decay in the tomb, for God would not leave Him in the grave (as prophesied in Psalm 16:10):

Acts 2:27 (NKJV) ²⁷ For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Psalms 16:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

3. THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS (Spring Feast)

The Feast of Firstfruits was celebrated the day after the Sabbath following the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus does not say the 16th of Nissan as some teach say in error, Leviticus 23 says the day after the Sabbath). It was the celebration of the Firstfruits of the winter crop that was planted (barley), where the priest would take a sheaf of the barley and wave it before the Lord, and it was a celebration because it represented God's pledge to fulfill the harvest. The seed that was placed in the earth has broken through the earth, has risen from beneath, and now is ready to produce fruit. The week that Jesus was crucified, the Feast of Firstfruits was the 17th of Nissan, which would thus make it 3 days after the Passover. Jesus fulfilled this Feast prophetically by being the first to overcome death forever, and be the first of the many to follow who would overcome death forever. The very day the Jewish people were celebrating this Feast of Firstfruits down at the Temple, Jesus was rising from the dead. By the way, the 17th was the very same day that the ark rested on dry ground after the flood (God changed the calendar in Exodus and the 7th month became the 1st month).

(1 Corinthians 15:20 KJV) But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

(Genesis 8:4 NKJV) Then the ark rested in the seventh month, the seventeenth day of the month, on the mountains of Ararat.

The 3 Spring Feast have all been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. Today's study is the middle Feast, the Feast of Pentecost.

4. THE FEAST OF PENTECOST (Summer Feast)

The Feast of Pentecost was the Feast celebrating the fruit of the Summer harvest (wheat) – that was planted in the springtime, and here in Acts 2 we will see the first fruits of a Harvest that is still gathering some 2000 years later, as on this day we will see 3,000 people give their life to Christ.

(Acts 2:1 NKJV) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

5. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS (FALL FEAST)

The Feast of Trumpets was the celebration of the “Civil New Year”. It happened in the 7th month of the Jewish calendar (Tishri). The 1st month (Nissan) was the first month of the spiritual calendar, and (Tishri) was the first month of the civil calendar. The celebration is likened to our New Years celebration, where we feel it’s a new year, and there is hope of a new beginning. This Feast (and the other 2) have not been prophetically fulfilled yet, but I think we can all see what this points to, and that is the rapture:

Leviticus 23:23-24 (NKJV) ²³Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴“Speak to the children of Israel, saying: ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a sabbath-rest, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NKJV) ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-18 (NKJV) ¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Revelation 4:1 (NKJV) ¹After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.”

6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT (FALL FEAST)

The Day of Atonement was 9 days after the Feast of Trumpets (the 10th of Tishri) (this Feast is also called Yom Kipper, and/or the Day of Reckoning) where the High Priest of Israel would go into the Holy of Holies in the Temple (that once a year) to ask God for forgiveness of sins for the Nation. We can see prophetically that this points to the Day of Reckoning that will come during the 7 year Tribulation Period (as God deals with the Nations, Israel most specifically), or it could be the very end when God judges the Nations; I am not totally sure, but we have a front row seat whatever Day that is.

Revelation 6:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

Matthew 25:31-33 (NKJV) ³¹“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. ³³And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES (FALL FEAST)

The Feast of Tabernacles (also called Feast of Booths, and/or the Feast of Ingathering) occurred on the (15th of Tishri) and was the Jewish celebration of God’s deliverance from Egypt and their survival in the 40 year wandering of the wilderness. To celebrate they would for 7 days build temporary houses outside their home, and live in them to remember the wilderness wandering and God’s great provision and protection upon them, and then bringing them into the Promised Land. The Feast of Tabernacles is a prophetic picture of the bringing us out of these temporary dwellings in this temporary land, and taking us into our new bodies in our permanent home – heaven, and establishing of His Kingdom (scholars debate if this is the Millennial Kingdom or the Heavenly Kingdom – and to that I answer again, don’t know but have front row seats when it happens, but more importantly, the good news as I had said, it is a mandatory Feast, so we will be there).

Revelation 20:4 (NKJV) ⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Revelation 21:1-4 (NKJV) ¹Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. ²Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with

them and be their God. ⁴And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Back to Pentecost / On a Sunday / Take note 7day Adventist / Interesting Note on Sunday

So back to the Feast of Pentecost, it is on Sunday. Take note the 7 Day Adventist who say worship must be on Saturday, for the Church is birthed on a Sunday. For the Jewish people, they have to sit back and say, why is this Feast on Sunday (and not Saturday), just like the Feast of Firstfruit was. What we clearly see here is that God is making a point of the importance of Sunday, and we will see that it is the day of the week the early Church met. Many teachers errantly say that Pentecost was 50 from Passover, not so, it was 50 days after the Feast of Firstfruits (aka – Resurrection Sunday), and we see God's New Covenant counts from the Resurrection, not the death of Christ.

Interesting Note on Leaven Bread / Sin in the Church

Another interesting note, the Feast of Pentecost say to eat "leavened" bread, while all the other Feast say "unleavened" bread. Leaven throughout the Scriptures is a picture of sin, and yet here during Pentecost they partake of leaven. The answer is, Pentecost is the birth of the Church, and the Church will be anything but perfect and sinless. I guess the only thing that surprises me about that is that sinners come to a church, and are totally amazed that there are sinners there; there is this expectation that everyone in the church is to be perfect. Pentecost gives the picture, there are sinners (leaven) within the Church.

Leviticus 23:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits to the LORD.

Jerusalem Packed / Some Estimate bigger than Passover / Millions There

Jerusalem is packed for the Feast of Pentecost; some historian estimate had more people there than Passover because it was 50 days after Passover and the shipping lanes would have been fully open and many more foreigners would be coming from abroad. So like Passover there could have been millions of people in Jerusalem.

Pentecost has Fully Come / 1500 Years Waiting for Fullness / Today – Fully Come

Verse 1 – had fully come - Leviticus 23 was the establishment of the Feast of Pentecost, it was established some 1,500 years before this day in Acts 2. So some 1500 times Pentecost had come, and Pentecost had gone, and they never saw the full fulfillment as it was intended, but this day we read about – Pentecost had fully come!

(Acts 2:2 NKJV) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

(Acts 2:3 NKJV) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

(Acts 2:4 NKJV) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Sound – no Wind / Audio before the Visual

Verse 1 - And suddenly there came a sound from heaven - Notice there was no wind, just the sound. Notice the audio came before the visual, the sound of the wind before the sight of the fire because the Word of the Lord always precedes the work of the Lord. The Word always came before the miracles (see Mark 16). The Word confirms the miracles. Churches that seek signs before the Word are out-of-order (literally).

Mark 16:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

No Formula for Prayer / Not Position body – but Heart / Are you Hungering?

Verse 2 and it filled the whole house where they were sitting - No formula for prayer, you can sit, you can stand, you can kneel, or you can walk. It is not the position of you body, but the position

of your heart – When you pray Believer are you waiting on the Lord? Are you hungering and thirsting for Him? You don't have to do something weird to get His attention, just be open to Him.

Cloven Divided / What Means? – Not sure / James says it is Powerful

Verse 3 - Then there appeared to them divided tongues – maybe your OKJV say “cloven” which means to divide; so the fire came and divided upon every person. What exactly does this fire mean? I am not sure, but I know that the tongue is a powerful thing as James says.

James 3:5 (NKJV) ⁵Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

Upon / Spirit is In a Person as a Guarantee - Firstfruits

Verse 3 - and one sat upon each of them –The Spirit is upon them, and thus different from being in them. The Spirit comes into a person once they believe in Christ, and God the Spirit will never leave us once He has taken up residence in us. He promises never to leave us nor forsake us, and here is the guarantee, His Spirit within us. As with the Feast of Firstfruit (the 3rd Feast), the Holy Spirit is a Guarantee that God will finish what He started in us. So this move of the Spirit is a different move in that God is upon them, so much so that everyone around them will recognize it so as we read on.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

(Acts 2:5 NKJV) And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

(Acts 2:6 NKJV) And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

(Acts 2:7 NKJV) Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

People all over are Here / As they Heard Praise they Gathered

Dispersed Jews from all nations had gathered together in the Holy City for the Feast of Pentecost. When they heard about what was happening in the Upper Room, they gathered together to see for themselves what was going on. As they heard praise, adoration, and worship in their native tongues, they were amazed.

Confounded because knew Unlearned Men

They are confounded because they knew that these men speaking these things were ignorant, unlearned men, who were speaking their language in perfection.

Acts 4:13 (NKJV) ¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

What a Counter to Babylon

What a counter to Babylon when they built the tower of Babel to reach up into heaven on their own works (and make a name for themselves – Gen 11:4), so God confounds them by confusing their languages. Here God through the work of the Spirit confounds man again by bringing them together in language, that all can hear, and none are confused, and all can hear the Words of God and be united with Him through His Spirit, not man's work, and thus the birthing of the Church, for the disciples aren't making a name for themselves, but making the name of Christ known (and this is key in understanding and receiving the baptism of the Holy Spirit – it is for the making and exulting the name of Christ).

Genesis 11:4-9 (NKJV) ⁴And they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth." ⁵But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. ⁶And the LORD said, "Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. ⁷Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech."

⁸So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city.

⁹Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

(Acts 2:8 NKJV) "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

(Acts 2:9 NKJV) "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

(Acts 2:10 NKJV) "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

(Acts 2:11 NKJV) "Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

16 Regions

There are 16 regions represented here:

- Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, - Modern day Iran.
- and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, - Modern day Iraq.
- and in Judaea – Modern day Israel (outer parts of Jerusalem).
- and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, - Modern day Turkey.
- in Egypt – obviously Modern day Egypt.
- and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene – maybe Libya, but maybe N. Africa.
- and strangers of Rome - Rome
- Jews and proselytes - Israel
- Cretes - Modern day Greece
- and Arabians, -Probably not Saudi Arabia, but Modern day Damascus (Syria)

2 Languages / Earthly & Heavenly / This is Earthly in Acts 2

There are two tongues we see in the Bible. One is a heavenly language tongue; the other tongue is an earthly language (such as English, Hebrew, and Greek). The tongue we see in this passage is an earthly language (though manifested supernaturally by the Spirit). Everyone who heard the disciples could hear and understand them because they were speaking in their native language.

(Acts 2:5 NKJV) And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

(Acts 2:6 NKJV) And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

(Acts 2:7 NKJV) Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

Acts 10 – See Heavenly / Will do Topical Study in Acts 10 (Confusion & Abuse)

In Acts 10 we will see the manifestation of people talking in tongues of the heavenly language. So we will wait until we get to chapter 10 to do an in-depth study on tongues. I don't want to rush that study for the speaking of tongues has caused much abuse and much confusion in the Church, and I think that should not be. We see tongues bring unity and growth to the Church here in Acts 2, and so it will be in Acts 10. So we will do a topical study on tongues, explaining the difference between the earthly language and heavenly language then. But as for today, we see that they are speaking in an earthly language, and people can clearly understand it.

(Acts 2:12 NKJV) So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

(Acts 2:13 NKJV) Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

When Experience Dynamic Spirit – Mockers Come / David Danced – Michal Barren

Whenever people start experiencing the dynamic of the Holy Spirit, there are those who say, "What meaneth this?" Others mockingly say, "They're full of new wine." While David worshiped the Lord and danced before God with all his might in his underwear, his wife, Michal, watched from her window. When David walked in, she sarcastically said, "Didn't you look wonderful out there? That was real kingly." "What I have done I have done as unto the Lord," David replied. "But, Michal, because you have mocked this, you will be barren all the days of your life" (see 2 Samuel 6:20–23). So, too, the Michal in you and me will forever mock. "You're lifting your hands, isn't that great? You're praying in gibberish. Isn't that wonderful? Come on, now. Get real." There

are born-again believers with the mentality of Michal who mock the things of the Spirit and call them demonic. I'm not saying they don't love the Lord. I'm not saying they're not born again. I am saying there's a "barren-ness" about them.

2 Samuel 6:23 (NKJV) ²³Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Attacks Come – Need Power / Military – Best Defense is Mighty Offense / Gun - Knife

They are not hearing a sermon at this point, but a praise and worship exaltation. Here these disciples are, worshipping the Lord, praising His Holy Name, this is a mountaintop experience, this is the Swiss Alps of prayer services, and then – comes the mocking, the challenges, and the attacks. Here in we see why God says you will need "POWER", for in and of ourselves we can't stand alone against the attacks of our peers. We say in the military community, the best defense is a mighty offense. The man who brings a gun to a knife fight has a tremendous advantage. God gives the power to these disciples to stand the attack, and to go on the offensive.

Answer Challenge by Word

Peter will answer their challenge with the Word. Whatever we do in the Lord must have a Biblical basis.

(Acts 2:14 NKJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

(Acts 2:15 NKJV) "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

(Acts 2:16 NKJV) "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

Conclusion

World we can't Wait to get Out Of – God Loves / We need filled – World in Need of Spirit

This world that drives you crazy, that you can't wait to get out of, God loves. Now that we are in, we can say get us out of here, but the Lord says more to come, as I used that person in your life, it is now time for you to be that person in another's life. Everyone of us needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit, for this world is in need of the Holy Spirit,

I Look World & You – Know I need More / Haunting Sense Need More / A-S-K

I can look at this world, I know I can look out at this church and know that I am not all that I can be; when I look out at you, think about you through the week, I have a deep haunting sense that I am not all that I need to be, I need more to meet the needs of your life, my family's life, but the good news is that God freely gives of the Spirit and all we need to do is ask, and He will give us all that we need for that day, for that moment. He is ever so gracious that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). That His mercies are new every morning for great is His faithfulness (Lam 3:23-24). For He wants all that look upon us to know that we are His disciples because of our love one for another (John 13:35).

Luke 11:9-13 (NKJV) ⁹*"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

Can we have this Power

Whether it be ourselves or others, we can put this baptism of the Holy Spirit as something unobtainable, something that requires some special actions that are far beyond ourselves. But what have we learned today, what have we seen today, we seen the baptism of the Holy Spirit is to present Jesus Christ to people in a way that they can understand who He is, and for them to hear of His wonderful works (verse 11). What did these disciples do to obtain this power:

- They scheduled their life around Jesus' schedule, not Jesus around their schedule (2:1)
- They were in Prayer (2:1)
- They were in Unity one with another (2:1)
- They were looking to glorify only the Name of Jesus, not themselves (2:7)
- They were proclaiming His wonderful works (worshipping Him) – (2:11)

So the question for us today is, are these things beyond us? I think we can all answer, absolutely not. They are all things we can do, and therefore the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not beyond us, but here for us, right now, today!

Power Holy Spirit – Like Electricity

The power of the Holy Spirit is like electricity. It won't enter something from which it can't exit. We want the power of the Holy Spirit. The question is, will there be a place for it to go? When we witness, the power of the Spirit surges through us. There is unbelievable joy in sharing the gospel. A lot of believers go from meeting to meeting looking for some "Holy Ghost high" because they're not witnessing. They go to this convention and that seminar—and the high lasts for a week or two. But after that, they're back in the wilderness because the Holy Ghost was given for the sole purpose of empowering us to share with the Rahabs around us the Good News of the gospel. When we say, "Lord, I'm tired of wandering in the wilderness," He baptizes us in the Jordan and empowers us to be His witnesses. When we say, "I want to share the plan of salvation with my secretary. Empower me," or, "I want to talk to my buddy about You, Lord. Make me bold," we'll be empowered in ways we never could have imagined. How long has it been since you've shared the gospel, the plan of salvation, the scarlet cord with someone who's not a believer? By faith, receive the power to be a witness. Awaiting you is a land of milk and honey, fruit and abundance. And you get there by going in as a witness. It's time to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land of the Spirit-filled life. Come join us on our journey.

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost (2:14-41)

Part 1 – Acts 2:14-21

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

120 Gathered – Spirit Falls / Worship / Tongues – Dialect / What does this Mean?

The 120 disciples are gathered in the Upper Room, proclaiming the wonderful works of God (v.11), the Spirit of God falls upon them, and their prayer and worship gathering turns into a divine appointment as they begin to speak in the tongues (dialect/language) of other nations, and the multitudes of thousands passing by hearing in their own language, and says, what could this possibly mean?

(Acts 2:11 NKJV) "Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues **the wonderful works of God.**"

(Acts 2:12 NKJV) So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

(Acts 2:13 NKJV) Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

First Sermon of New Church / Prayer – not Cleaver / About Jesus – not Spirit

And so we begin our study today with the first sermon of the new Church. May I point out, the Christian church was born not out of a clever sermon but in a humble prayer meeting. May I also point out as we study, the sermon is not about the Holy Spirit (as many make it out to be), it is about the Son of God, Jesus Christ. What we read and see today is exactly what Jesus said it would be, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, but draws attention to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit knocks on the heart of men and woman and says, here He is, here is what you been longing for, here is what you are in need, a Savior and a Lover, - Jesus Christ.

John 14:26 (NKJV) ²⁶*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

John 16:7-11 (NKJV) ⁷*Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.*

Peter's 1st Sermon

(Acts 2:14 NKJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

The 11 – Includes Matthias

Note he stands with the 11, so this includes Matthias.

Peter – Cowered – now Towers / We must Pray to Stand in Wicked World / 1,000's

Peter, the giant of a fisherman who had cowered before a servant girl, now towers above the crowd. Why? One reason: He was empowered with the Spirit. Christian, we too must pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit so we too can stand in this wicked and twisted generation. The baptism gives us power to withstand the mocking, to stand before the skeptics, to not cower in fear. Peter cowered before a servant girl only 50 days ago, and here he stands before who knows how many, 5,000, 10,000, who knows because we know that 3,000 get saved, who knows how many others rejected the message. You don't think some of these people recognized Peter (James

and John), hey we remember you, we heard about you (cock-a-doodle-do, hahaha the crowd would laugh), but Peter will not cower this time, but he will tower!

He can Stand – because first Sat / Have you Sat?

Peter can stand, because Peter had sat (and waited for the baptism). When you find it difficult to stand, maybe it's because you haven't taken the time to sit lately.

Peter Stands – Herald / Proclaiming Something – Listen Up / Say it as Sure

Peter stands, yet if you remember Jesus sat. In those times a teacher would sit and teach; but as a herald would stand to proclaim something. So Peter is proclaiming something, by his standing he is saying "listen up". Christian, when you proclaim any word of Christ, proclaim it as truth, proclaim as sure; if we proclaim it in our voice as a "maybe", or a "well at least that is what I think", the hearer will hear the doubt. I am not saying in-your-face, I am saying, "God's Word is truth, and therefore it is sure". There has been a saying that has become popular in the Christian circle, and that is, "God said, I believe it, and that settles it". Not true, "God said it, that settles it", doesn't matter what you believe – for what you believe what change what God said.

(Acts 2:15 NKJV) "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

Not Drunk as Think – or – Drunk in Different Way / Ephesians 5 – Disciples were Doing

Verse 15 - "These are not drunk as you suppose," can have a couple of implications. It can mean, "These men are not drunk, as you're suggesting." Or it can mean, "These men are not drunk in the way that you think. They're drunk with a different wine, the new wine of the Holy Ghost, not distilled spirits, but the dynamic Spirit, just as it says in Ephesians 5. By the way if you notice, everything we read in Ephesians 5, is exactly what was going on in the Upper Room, and thus is confirmation to us that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not some unreachable dream, something for the super-Christian, but available every day to us everyday common Believers. As Ephesians 5 says, so were these disciples doing, and so can we, for we see the disciples were talking about the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11), and that would include speaking psalms, singing hymns, spiritual songs, and giving thanks, and as we began the chapter, they were all in one accord, they were in unity, and they were laying down their differences (who is the greatest), submitting to one another according to the Word.

Acts 2:11 (NKJV) ¹⁷*Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."*

Acts 2:1 (NKJV) ¹*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.*

Ephesians 5:17-21 (NKJV) ¹⁷*Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.* ¹⁸*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,* ¹⁹*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,* ²⁰*giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,* ²¹*submitting to one another in the fear of God.*

3rd Hr – 9am / Jesus can't be Silenced / I bet Wave Offering going on at Temple

The third hour is 9am. How interesting that is the same hour that Jesus was nailed to the cross 50+ days ago; the Word of Life will never be silenced! My first guess is that at that very same moment, there in the Temple, there was something going on to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost (mind you it is very likely that this Upper Room was in the immediate vicinity of the Temple precinct because so many people were passing by it for there to be thousands that would hear this sermon by Peter). I wonder if when Peter begins to preach, it is the exact moment that the High Priest begins to wave the sheaf offering of Pentecost at the Temple. I believe every moment and every moved was divinely designed by the Lord, there is nothing by happen chance. When we start to believe that personally, life gets real fun too!

Mark 15:25 (KJV) ²⁵*And it was the third hour, and they crucified him.*

Leviticus 23:20 (NKJV) ²⁰*The priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits as a wave offering before the LORD, with the two lambs. They shall be holy to the LORD for the priest.*

(Acts 2:16 NKJV) "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

People Question – Answer with the Word

When people have questions about things they see happening in ministry, in the Spirit, or in worship, like Peter, we should be able to answer, “This is that which is spoken of scripturally.

Challenge Comes – Peter Answers / No Bible for Peter – became Scholar with Jesus

The challenge has come, Peter answers the challenge with the Word. Mind you, all these passages of Scripture Peter is quoting, he is quoting from memory and/or inspiration. He doesn't have the OT scrolls in his hands, he didn't have a pre-assembled book, printed out, organized, in dozens of different translations, there wasn't one next to his bed, in his study, in the 1st John, the 2nd John, or the 3rd John, he has spent time with the Living Word for 3 years (Jesus the Christ), and he has this baptism of the Holy Spirit. Peter was an incredible expositor, quoting from the Psalms in Acts 1 and from Joel in Acts 2. The fisherman became a scholar by hanging out with Jesus. If you want to be one whom the Lord uses, be like Peter. Hang out with Jesus, and inevitably, you will get a firm grasp of the Word.

Jesus said He will give us the words / Jesus is the Spirit of Prophecy

Jesus had said don't worry what you will say, for the Spirit will give you utterance. In Revelation it says that Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy; prophecy is the forth telling of the Word of God unto a people.

Matthew 10:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

Revelation 19:10 (KJV) ¹⁰And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

You've been There – Start to Share / Man I was Good / Baptism - Language they Understnd

You've been there, you all have experienced this, you begin to share the Word with someone and all of a sudden these verses, these points, just start flowing out of your mouth, and you are like where did that come from? Afterwards we say, wow I was good, hahaha, but lets not get too puffed-up for God has done the same with a donkey, and still uses a donkey on Sunday. Beloved, that is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as He gives you utterance to speak the Gospel in a language that people can understand, to speak it backed with power that is knocking on the door of their hearts.

Peter Locked and Loaded – Living Word / We must Study Word

Now, I personally believe that Peter was locked and loaded with these words because he spent so much time with the Living Word (Jesus), and Jesus had shared all these things with him, and now the Holy Spirit is bringing them to remembrance. I add that because it is important that we study this Word, as we do every Sunday and Wednesday here, and you do daily in your lives, we study the Word so that it may come back to the surface when the need is present, whether that be in witnessing, or counseling, or just for our strength for the day. Hence, why we are told, to study the Word so that we might ready for good works:

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) ¹⁵Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (KJV) ¹⁶All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

FRM – Pastor George

Oh the treasure of this Word, how blessed we are to have it, and we as Americans to have it so readily. Just this week I received word from one of the foreign ministry's we support as a church, they are called “Far Reaching Ministries”, (if you remember last year we as a church bought a camel for the missionary to go deeper and farther into remote areas with the gospel). Well let me share a story of where and what our support is helping in a different area:

During the riots in Kenya, a member of Calvary Chapel Nairobi, went through a tremendous trial. His home is in Kibera, one of the largest slums in East Africa. George and his family belong to the Kikuyu tribe. Most of his neighbors were of the Luo tribe. Since the December 2007 elections, the Luo tribe has been persecuting the Kikuyu tribe. One morning George was forced from his home, pushed to his knees and a gun was put to his head. The gunman pulled the trigger, but the gun did not fire. Then George said, Please don't shoot me, I am a pastor!" Another rioter said, "Let's cut him!" By God's grace another rioter intervened, saying, "No, I know him and he is a good man, so we will leave him." George pleaded with his captors, "Please let me take just one thing from my house." Reluctantly, they agreed. George ran inside and grabbed his most treasured possession – his Bible.

Bible vs Cell phone

Christian, we know we can just go up the street to the mall and buy another, but do you grasp the value of this man's Bible to him. Though we can just go up and get another, may we ask ourselves; do we cherish this Word as this man does? I wonder what would happen if we treated our Bible like we treat our cell phones?

- What if we carried it around in our purses or pockets?
- What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we used it to receive messages?
- What if we treated it like we couldn't live without it?
- What if we gave it to kids as gifts?
- What if we used it as we traveled, made sure we packed it?
- What if we used it in case of an emergency, to call for help?
- What if we upgraded it to get the latest version?

Word is Living - Powerful

The Word, it is Living and Power (Hebrews 4:12); what God did with Peter here, is what He will do with us.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) *¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Let's read verses 17-21 together and then come back and break it down.

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.*

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.*

(Acts 2:19 NKJV) *I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.*

(Acts 2:20 NKJV) *The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

(Acts 2:21 NKJV) *And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'*

Imagine Peter sharing this Word / 1000 yr Ago / Spurgeon / Peter saw More - so Will We

I can only imagine how Peter was proclaiming this word; I can see it as if I was there, imagine, what they are experiencing was written over 1,000 years ago, and they are living it, they are the fulfillment of it. Peter would not have been reading it as, oh hum, it's as the prophet Joel said it would be. Peter would have been lifting off the ground as he spoke these words. His face would have been illuminated with joy, for he was experiencing the fullness of joy. Charles Spurgeon while teaching his seminary students said, "men when you talk about God and His wondrous works and heaven, put a smile on your face, when you talk about hell, your normal face will do". Peter must have been like, wow we got to walk with Jesus, see His resurrection, watch Him ascend into heaven, and then this (the baptism of the Holy Spirit), amazing. Guess what Peter, there is still more to come, in a few minutes 3000 people are going to get saved, in a few days or hours you are going to heal a crippled man, you'll be imprisoned but then miraculously freed from prison, you'll be a key in establishing the early church, and the list goes on (you'll even be the first

Pope, but you won't know that). Christian, there is no life more exciting than the Christian life, and if what you have seen and experience is only the beginning of what God is still yet to do (regardless of your age), God is always ready and looking to do another mighty work. Christian when you share this word, with your kids, co-workers, in the mission field, share it with life in your voice, this Word is living, so share it with Life, let them see the life that it has brought you, and it will hunger them for the same life. Ho hum, this is what the prophet Joel said it will be. Ho hum Jesus came to give you life and that more abundant – no, Jesus Christ has come to give you Life my friend, and that more abundant! Do you want new life and to be set free from this fading and fleeting world?

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

All Flesh – Gentiles / Passage destroys all Jewish Prejudice / Not Limited to Prophets, Priest, Male, Levites

Spirit on ALL flesh, not just Israel... meaning the Gentiles as well as Israel. Joel prophesied that in the Last Days the Spirit would be poured out upon the young men and the old men, the young men seeing visions, the old men dreaming dreams (Joel 2:28). This passage destroys every major Hebrew prejudice. No class distinction, between rich and poor, Jew or Gentile, male or female. Furthermore, the idea of prophesying is no longer limited to the office of the prophet. They were used to having a prophet, a priest but Joel says “Your sons and daughters shall prophesy.” It doesn't denote just the Levites, or those ordained in the office of a prophet. Even servants and handmaidens. To the Jews this must have been very strange, but it wasn't heresy for Peter is quoting Sacred Text, one of their recognized prophets.

No Doubt – Who are You to Speak / Joel said Common People

This inspired word totally crushes all Jewish prejudice. No doubt some of the listeners would have challenged and said, “hey who are you to speak these words!” These words if they are true should be coming from right over there at the Temple through the priests, not some fisherman. But the prophet Joel said it would be so, inspired by God, that God's Spirit would be poured out on common people, not the “supreme” people, people so common they would people like fisherman, tax collectors, mechanics, schedulers, housewives, and high school students.

I'm sure you've been Challenged / IBS and Me / University Professor

I'm sure you have been challenged somewhere along the line, hey who are you to speak these things of God, why should I hear you and not the priest or religious leader. I am reminded when I was in the Lord for about 2 years. I was teaching the Inductive Bible Study Method, had been to Russia teaching it, and various other personal instructions. So I called the church I attended before I got saved, offered to teach the IBS free of charge, even offered to supply the workbooks. The priest of the church said the IBS sounded very interesting and asked me to come in and talk with him about it, so I did. I think it was a set-up, but anyhow, as we talked and the conversation went here and there, he said, “I bet you believe in a literal 6 day creation”. I said well actually I do; he said I knew it. He said we believe in theistic evolution, in that God spoke it (Big Bang), and then let it evolve from there. I said well, to believe that is to disregard the rest of chapter 1 of Genesis, and the detailed account of God creating. I said, it is quite interesting that first word used for “create” in the Hebrew was the word “bara”, which means to create out of nothing, and then the remaining words used for “create” was the Hebrew word “asa” which means to create out of existing material. The priest got all fired-up and said, now just who do you think you are that you can study the Greek and Hebrew, those things are for the scholars not someone like yourself. Acts 2:17, the Spirit has been poured out on “People like Me, and You”, and we can not only understand these things, but we can bring others into understanding. The Spirit of God will illuminate the Scriptures to us, to understand and to share. I remember at that same period, I was at a wedding, and present was a friend's aunt who taught religion and theology at the local university, but she was really just a job, an intellectual understanding, she didn't profess Christ, but that all religions lead to God. Someone asked her a question that wasn't theological, but was

about the heart of God, and what He thought about man; she said, you know I really can't answer that question, you should ask Ray he is better suited to answer your question than me. She differed her 20 years of teaching to a young man only 2 years in the Lord, but her directing was correct for God has poured His Spirit out upon all flesh, we if they will call upon Him they shall be saved, and will have His words of life to treasure and to share.

Note on Theistic Evolution / God got His hands Dirty for You!

On a note about that theistic evolution, let me just say this; God didn't just speak it, He is much more intimate with you, you are much more precious to Him, then to just speak it into existence. God wasn't just going to speak it, nor was He just going to sit back and watch happen, God's love for you was so much that He was willing to get His hands dirty for you and me (man), and He came into the Garden and knelt in the dirt, and formed and fashioned man (you) with His own hands – God was willing to get dirty for you and for me. He was willing to get His hands wet as He formed us in our mother's womb (Psalm 139). And because of His great and endless love for you and for me, He was willing to get His hands bloody as He chose the nails. No, there was no theistic evolution, God wasn't going to just sit back and watch our lives evolve, and nor will He do that today, He is ever so interested in every detail of our lives. He knows every hair on our head, catches every tear, and if He was to number the thoughts of you today, they would out number the grains of sand in the sea. Hey catch that, when I look at the grains of sand on the shore, I see a sum total before me, I didn't see 100, and then next trip to the beach see another 100, now I've seen 200. God says today, today's thought about you, just today alone, would number all the grains of sand on the sea. No, there was no theistic evolution.

Matthew 10:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰*But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹*Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*

Psalms 56:8 (NKJV) ⁸ *You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?*

Psalms 139:17-18 (KJV) ¹⁷ *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!* ¹⁸ *If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.*

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

(Acts 2:19 NKJV) I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

(Acts 2:20 NKJV) The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

(Acts 2:21 NKJV) And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

Joel 2 begins goes from Pentecost – Tribulation / Obvious because no Blood Moon

Joel 2 speaking about the last days covers the period from Pentecost through the Tribulation period. Pentecost is not the full fulfillment of Joel 2, but only the beginning. This is obvious because on the Day of Pentecost, the sun wasn't darkened, nor the moon looked as blood, for these things will happen in the Tribulation Period (see Revelation 6 – the 6th Seal). The Last Days are from the first coming of Christ to the Second coming, and gift of salvation would be available to any who would call out for it.

6th Seal – Earth in Upheaval

(Revelation 6:12 NKJV) *I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood.*

(Revelation 6:13 NKJV) *And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind.*

(Revelation 6:14 NKJV) *Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.*

Salvation that Simple / Have you Call upon the Name / Here are some Details

But during this period, from the first coming to the second coming, anyone and everyone can be saved by calling on the name of the Lord. Salvation is that simple, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved. Have you called upon the Name of the Lord yet? If not,

Peter gives some details of what exactly that means in verses 22-36. We will pick up there next study.

Watch how Peter covers Feast of Israel / Great Flow to Use in Personal Evangelism

Just as a foretaste of next week, as you read ahead and study this I want you to see how Peter essentially is using the Feast of Pentecost (and the 3 Spring Feasts) as his illustration points. We studied those last week, so go back and refresh yourself on them so you can see how Peter wonderfully works them in his sermon and 3,000 people will get saved, and it is a great flow for you to follow as you share the gospel with your loved ones and neighbors.

THE 7 FEASTS OF ISRAEL

THE SPRING FEASTS

1. THE PASSOVER
2. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD
3. THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS

THE SUMMER FEAST

4. THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

THE FALL FEASTS OF ISRAEL

5. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS
6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Ho Hum

This is what the prophet Joel had spoken, ho hum.....no, no, no:

(Acts 2:14 NKJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

(Acts 2:15 NKJV) "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

(Acts 2:16 NKJV) "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;

Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost (2:14-41)

Part 2 – Acts 2:22-41

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

120 Gathered – Spirit Falls / Worship / Tongues – Dialect / What does this Mean?

The 120 disciples are gathered in the Upper Room, proclaiming the wonderful works of God (v.11), the Spirit of God falls upon them, and their prayer and worship gathering turns into a divine appointment as they begin to speak in the tongues (dialect/language) of other nations, and the multitudes of thousands passing by hearing in their own language, and says, what could this possibly mean?

(Acts 2:11 NKJV) "Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

(Acts 2:12 NKJV) So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

(Acts 2:13 NKJV) Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

First Sermon of New Church / Prayer – not Cleaver / About Jesus – not Spirit

And so we continue with part 2 our study of the first sermon of the new Church. May I point out, the Christian church was born not out of a clever sermon but in a humble prayer meeting. May I also point out as we study, the sermon is not about the Holy Spirit (as many make it out to be), it is about the Son of God, Jesus Christ. What we read and see today is exactly what Jesus said it would be, the Holy Spirit does not draw attention to Himself, but draws attention to Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit knocks on the heart of men and woman and says, here He is, here is what you been longing for, here is what you are in need, a Savior and a Lover, - Jesus Christ.

John 14:26 (NKJV) ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 16:7-11 (NKJV) ⁷Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

No Sermon – No Program / Spirit Flowing Through & To / Lorenzo de' Medici

No clever sermon, no man made program, just the Holy Spirit moving in common everyday people, calling out to the need that is within every man, a lover and a Savior. In his sermon, "A Dangerous Pentecost," Halford Luccock tells of Lorenzo de' Medici, the great Florentine patron of the arts who was very proud of the spectacles he staged for the citizenry. Among his productions were several amazingly realistic religious pageants performed in church. But one Pentecost, Lorenzo went too far: he used actual fire to depict the descent of the tongues of flames on the apostles. The fragile stage set caught fire and, before horrified onlookers, the entire church burned to the ground (Marching Off the Map, Harper, 1952). The moral is clear: pray for Pentecostal power, but don't try to manufacture it.

Every Person hear in Native Language / Gospel for Everyone

Every person present could hear in their own language (now Peter's sermon was probably in the common Jewish language of Hebrew or Aramaic), but as the Spirit moved in the Upper Room, everyone could hear in their native language. Here we see God giving a clue, a message, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for every man, regardless of what part of the world they are from,

whether the USA, England, Australia, Israel, Iraq, Iran, or the outer parts of the world, the Gospel is for everyone. There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free just as the Apostle Paul would say through inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

Galatians 3:27-28 (KJV) ²⁷For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1st Sermon – Religious Speech / Miss – Gospel message of Freedom

Too often this first sermon is reviewed as a religious speech, Peter recaps the life of Jesus Christ here on earth, and the heart of the point is missed, this message is about freedom. That is what the Gospel is about, men and woman being set free. Set free just as Jesus said they would be (Luke 4).

Luke 4:17-19 (NKJV) ¹⁷And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

John 8:36 (NKJV) ³⁶Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

Says – Devout / Religion doesn't bring Freedom / Temple Sacrifice - Presence

It says the people present were “devout”, that means religious. Religion will bring no person freedom, in fact religion brings the opposite, it brings bondage and burden. These devout people would come to the Feast of Pentecost and been continually reminded of their failings, and their distance from the Holy God. They would have made their trip to the Temple to offer an innocent sacrifice, a peace offering, so that their conscience might be cleared from all their failings, so that they might be ceremonially clean to enter into the Temple precinct, the place where God dwelt, the place where sinful man could come into the presence of the Holy God.

(Acts 2:5 NKJV) And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

Do religious Obligation – Own Merit / Leave the Same / Face same Struggles / Different

These people would come, do their religious obligation, but go home with what they had come with, the pressure and burden of trying to please a Holy God on their own merit. They would go home to their families, without the same power they left with. They would face the same struggles as we still do today, failing marriages, depression, addictions, bondage to their perverted thoughts, anger, discontentment; year after year they left with no more freedom from those things than when they came, just a religious check mark in a box. But this Feast of Pentecost would be different for all those who would have ears to hear, hearts that were soft enough to be pricked, minds desiring a change; this Pentecost would set the captive free, Peters words would be more than a religious speech, it would be the keys to set them free.

Video – Set Me Free

This video isn't only about addiction, it is about a heart ready and desiring change, a heart crying out to be set free from the bondages of religion and self-help, a heart wanting new life, a heart wanting a new day.

How I remember the man in Mirror / The Message Came / Same 2,000 years Later / Sure

My how I remember the man in the mirror as in that video. I remember it like it was yesterday, though it was almost 25 years ago and lasted for 5 years, as I could look into the mirror after a night of so-called “living it up”, and look into my very own eyes and see right to the bottom and depth of my soul, looking into emptiness, which turned to hopeless that the world had to offer. But then a message came to me, a message that set me free, a message that has set me free, and for 17 years has never wavered, but only grown stronger and more sure. The message that

came to me is the same one that was proclaimed 2,000 years ago, and is still as validate and sure today as it was on the day Peter first proclaimed it.

(Acts 2:14 NKJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

(Acts 2:15 NKJV) "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

(Acts 2:16 NKJV) "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

(Acts 2:19 NKJV) I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

(Acts 2:20 NKJV) The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

(Acts 2:21 NKJV) And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

THE PASSOVER

(Acts 2:22 NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know;

(Acts 2:23 NKJV) "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

Peter Covers 1st 4 Feast in his Sermon

Interestingly Peter message will follow the first four Feast of Israel in perfect order. These devout and religious people would see the flow, and recognize it clearly, for year after year they would celebrate it, or in the least honor it as a religious obligation.

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Starts with Passover Lamb

Peter begin by taking about the Passover Lamb. The Passover was instituted to celebrate the angel of death passing over all whose house was covered with the blood of the lamb. It was the final blow to Pharaoh to let the children of Israel leave the bondage of slavery. Jesus would be the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover:

John 1:29 (NKJV) ²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

Perfect – Spotless / Approved – Miracles backed / I do Nothing of Myself / Nicodemus

Verse 22 - a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know; - Attested / Approved (demonstrated) of God as

a perfect Man, for the Passover Lamb had to be perfect and without spot or blemish to be offered before God, and so Jesus was. But to prove that Jesus was sent by God, he did things only God could do, as Jesus said, "I do nothing of Myself..." God demonstrated as approved by God through miracles and wonders and signs to you. When Nicodemus came to Jesus at night he said, "no man can do these things except he be sent by God". Jesus said believe Me or else believe Me for My works' sake.

John 8:28-29 (KJV) ²⁸Then said Jesus unto them, *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.* ²⁹And he that sent me is with me: *the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.*

John 3:1-2 (KJV) ¹There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: ²The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

John 14:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. ¹¹Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.

Verse 23 – God’s Sovereignty – Man’s Responsibility / Argument wasted Words

Verse 23 - "*Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;* - In verse 23, we see the tension between the sovereignty of God and the choice of man when Peter said, "You crucified Him. But it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." "Wait a minute," you say. "If it was by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, it was God's will that it happened. How then could the Jews be indicted for the death of Jesus?" It beats me. It's an endless argument we pea brains cannot figure out. All I know is this: God is sovereign, yet man is responsible by the choices he makes. God's will is worked out, yet man is held accountable for his actions. The whole argument of man's sovereignty and God's sovereignty is wasted words. Give your life to Christ today, and enjoy His hand and presence in your life today.

2 Ropes on a Pulley

During his days as guest lecturer at Calvin Seminary, R. B. Kuiper once used the following illustration of God's sovereignty and human responsibility:

"I liken them to two ropes going through two holes in the ceiling and over a pulley above. If I wish to support myself by them, I must cling to them both. If I cling only to one and not the other, I go down. I read the many teachings of the Bible regarding God's election, predestination, his chosen, and so on. I read also the many teachings regarding 'whosoever will may come' and urging people to exercise their responsibility as human beings. These seeming contradictions cannot be reconciled by the puny human mind. With childlike faith, I cling to both ropes, fully confident that in eternity I will see that both strands of truth are, after all, of one piece."

Peter doesn't Reconcile Them – Simply States It / That's Great Theology

This is the first sermon of the church, and Peter doesn't try to reconcile it, or explain it; he simply states it. He simply states God's sovereignty, and man's responsibility – now to me, that is great theology. Many people think they have great theology by "proving" they have the answer to one or the other, but I say great theology is saying "yes" to both, and the balance between them. The church today, and the church for 2,000 years should recognize this very illustration right here, Peter doesn't try to reconcile the two, he simply states the two, as should we.

JB Phillips

In the words of J. B. Phillips: If God was small enough for us to figure out, He wouldn't be big enough for us to worship.

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

(Acts 2:24 NKJV) "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

(Acts 2:25 NKJV) "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

(Acts 2:26 NKJV) Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.

(Acts 2:27 NKJV) For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

(Acts 2:28 NKJV) You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

Now talk Feast Unleavened Bread / Promise Jesus would not remain in Grave

Now Peter will speak in regards to the Feast of Unleavened Bread (during exodus from Egypt didn't have time to put leaven in bread to let it rise – as yeast/leaven decays it sends off a gas and it causes the bread to rise). So the promise that Jesus would not decay in the tomb, but it was a promise/illustration that He would raise from the dead.

Peter now Quotes Psalm 16 / David in Grave – Talking of Jesus

Here, Peter quotes yet another psalm, as he says (see Psalm 16:8–11). Since David's body did indeed see corruption when it became dust, he couldn't have been speaking about himself, but about the One who would succeed him—the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ.

Psalms 16:8-11 (NKJV)⁸ *I have set the LORD always before me;
Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.*

⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will rest in hope.*

¹⁰ *For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.*

¹¹ *You will show me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Rom 6:23 – Jesus never Sinned – Grave couldn't Keep Him

Romans 6:23 says the wages of sin is death. Since Jesus never sinned, death could not hold Him. He died in place of you and me, He died for us personally, but death could not hold Him permanently. He rose again.

Romans 6:23 (KJV)²³*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Hymn - Up from the Grave He Arose (Low in the Grave He Lay)

Words and music by Robert Lowry

1. Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior,
waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!
2. Vainly they watch his bed, Jesus my Savior,
vainly they seal the dead, Jesus my Lord!
3. Death cannot keep its prey, Jesus my Savior;
he tore the bars away, Jesus my Lord!

Chorus

Up from the grave he arose;
with a mighty triumph o'er his foes;
he arose a victor from the dark domain,
and he lives forever, with his saints to reign.
He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

David breaks forth into Praise / All Cases – Fullness & Joy / Study of David / Temple

Verse 28 - *You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'* – David after prophesying about the Lord overcoming death, that if the Christ should not be left in the grave, it is a picture, example, promise that His followers will not be left in the grave either, after prophesying about these things David breaks forth into spontaneous praise and worship by saying, “in Your presence is fullness of joy”. In all cases of Scripture where the word fullness and joy are used in the same passage, they all are in the context of being in the presence of the Lord. Man will never find fullness of joy apart from the presence of God; oh man

may have joy, but never full joy – unfortunately many are content to have joy, apart from full joy. David knows where full joy is found, and that is in the presence of the Lord. The study of the life of David is a must for every person, and you can do that simply by reading verse-by-verse through 1&2 Samuel, and 1&2 Chronicles. For me, one of the most defining examples of David's life, that speaks to my life, was his desire to build God a home, the Temple. His desire was to build the Temple, and that was after the Lord had taken his first child from his union with Bathsheba. Oh we can say, but it was David's sin, he brought that upon himself, but honestly do any of us truly apply that to our lives. Even when we know the mess, the pain, the heartbreak we are in is do to our own fault, do we really say, "I know I am in this situation because of my sin, so whatever it shall be, shall be". No, we all say please, Lord fix it, help me, I am your child please don't allow this happen, and then if He doesn't we say how could you and where were you. David would be no different than us, in fact we see him interceding during the illness of the child, hoping that the Lord might aid him, but the Lord didn't. Yet even after all that pain, disappointment, David would go on some time later to still want to build the Lord a Temple, to bring Him glory, and to glorify Him, to have a place for people to come worship Him, and a place that David may worship Him. Christian, you'll get your chance to do the same, for it is the world that we live in; if you can, if you will, be like David, and worship and glorify Him even after prayer request that were contrary to your desire, even after mountainous disappointment, even after you may feel He has let you down, but if you can be like David in those times, you will experience what David experienced, that in His presence is fullness of joy. Christian even in your lowest moment, build the Lord a Temple, and watch Him fill it.

1 Chronicles 28:2-3 (NKJV) ²Then King David rose to his feet and said, "Hear me, my brethren and my people: I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made preparations to build it. ³But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood.'

THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS

(Acts 2:29 NKJV) "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

(Acts 2:30 NKJV) "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

(Acts 2:31 NKJV) "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

(Acts 2:32 NKJV) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Firstfruits – Harvest / Our Thanksgiving / Jesus Picture and Promise

The Feast of Firstfruits was the offering unto God, the thanksgiving for the harvest. At the first part of June, they harvested the winter grain crops. Thus it was a celebration, much like our Thanksgiving Day, in giving thanks to God for the gathering in of the grain crops. The Fest of Firstfruits is the picture and promise that as Jesus rose from the dead, so too would all who follow Him.

Peter quotes Psalms 132 – Jesus right to the Throne

In verse 30, Peter now goes on to quote Psalms 132:11, about God's promise to David that one of David's descendants will always sit upon the throne of Israel, and Peter is declaring that the ultimate fulfillment of that promise is Jesus the Christ (Messiah). Peter is making proof-context that Jesus is the promised Messiah because He is a descendant of David, and that Jesus had the right to the throne of David through His lineage through David.

Psalms 132:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ The LORD has sworn in truth to David;

He will not turn from it:

"I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.

Matthew 1:1 (NKJV) ¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.....

Matthew 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶and Jesse begot David the king.

David the king begot Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah.

Peter makes Clear Not about David / Can see David's Tomb

Peter makes it clear that David was not speaking of himself, but one that would come after him, and that One is Jesus the Christ (the Messiah). Peter said David's grave is with us today, obviously the prophecy wasn't about him, for David's body is with us today. Even to the present day you can go to Jerusalem and in the area where they call it the upper room, up on Mt. Zion, in the room down below the upper room, there is a large silver casket and the Jews believe that David's remains are there in that casket. You will see them in there burning candles and praying at the tomb of David, there on Mt. Zion. Peter said his tomb is with us to this day.

Peter says we Saw Resurrection

Verse 32 - This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses - We're all witnesses. We saw it! We were witnesses of the resurrection. We saw Him after the resurrection.

1st Sermon – Steeped in Resurrection / Resurrection Power of Gospel / Your Witness

The first sermon ever preached was steeped deep in the resurrection. Let your witness always include the resurrection, for the resurrection is the power of the gospel.

Death stung itself to Death / 1 Cor 15

When death stung Jesus Christ, it stung itself to death.

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NKJV)⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Daddy takes the Sting

A little girl, allergic to bee stings, cringed in the back seat of the car. If the bee stung her, she could die within an hour. "Oh Daddy," she squealed in terror, "it's a bee and it's going to sting me!" The father pulled the car over to a stop and reached back to try to catch the bee. Buzzing around him, the bee bumped against the front windshield. The father trapped the bee in his fist. Holding the bee in his closed hand, the father waited for the sting. The bee stung his hand, and in pain, the father let it go. The bee was loosed into the car again, and the little girl panicked. "Daddy, its going to sting me!" Gently, the father said to his daughter, "It can't sting you now. Look at my hand. I took the sting for you." It can try to scare you and annoy you, but it can no longer hurt you.

Like the Father – Someone took the Sting

Like the father who lovingly saved his little girl from the bee sting with his hand, Someone lovingly took the sting of death for us in his hands so he could save us from the sting of death. Who did this for us? The Lord Jesus Christ did, when he died for our sins on the cross. Then he overcame (beat) death when he rose again the third day. Every person who repents (turns from sin, and turns to God) and believes on Jesus Christ as his or her Lord and Savior will never receive the sting of death in hell. Jesus Christ took the sting for us.

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NKJV)⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

Have you Trusted Him Today?

Have you trusted in Christ to take the sting of death away from you?

THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

(Acts 2:33 NKJV) "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

(Acts 2:34 NKJV) "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,

(Acts 2:35 NKJV) Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

(Acts 2:36 NKJV) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Now Speaking what they Currently See

Verse 33 - *out this which you now see and hear* - speaking of what they are currently seeing and hearing. What is happening on this day, is the move of the Holy Spirit the Church should want to see move like every day. I like what AW Tozer said in reference to this passage, he said in the church today there is lots heard, but little seen. Christian have all kinds of stuff to say about the move of the Holy Spirit (they have their systematic theology), but all that they ever do is talk, they never go out and do. Some people with their theology are so right, they are dead right.

Quotes Psalms 110 (Jesus had quoted in Matt 22) / Jesus is Son of God

Peter is now quoting from Psalms 110:1 (which Jesus Himself had given commentary on - see Matthew 22:41-46). David called his descendant his Lord. In Jewish culture, one would never call his offspring "Lord." "What is Peter implying?" his audience must have wondered. Peter's implication was simply this: Jesus, the Son of David, is more than merely a descendant of David. He is the Son of God.

*Psalms 110:1 (NKJV)*¹ *The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."*

*Matthew 22:41-46 (NKJV)*⁴¹*While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, ⁴²saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"*

They said to Him, "The Son of David."

⁴³*He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:*

⁴⁴ *"The LORD said to my Lord,
"Sit at My right hand,
Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"?"*

⁴⁵*If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" ⁴⁶And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.*

Pentecost – Proof of the Resurrection / Jesus had to Arise and Ascend – to Send

The Day of Pentecost, is more proof of the Resurrection of Christ. Yes there were eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection, but on the Day of Pentecost the proof of the resurrection was given to several thousands (all who are present and heard the tongues coming from the Upper Room). It is proof because Jesus said He would send the Holy Spirit when He returned to the Father. If Jesus is dead, still in the grave, He isn't at the right hand of the Father, at the throne of God in heaven, if He was still dead and in the grave, then He couldn't send the Promised Holy Spirit.

*Luke 24:49 (NKJV)*⁴⁹*Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."*

*John 14:26 (NKJV)*²⁶*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

*John 15:26 (NKJV)*²⁶*"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.*

*Acts 1:4-5 (NKJV)*⁴*And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; ⁵for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

(Acts 2:37 NKJV) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Cut to Heart by Word & Spirit / The Word does what it Say in Hebrews 4

They were cut to the heart, by the Word of God and the Spirit of God. The Word did as it says it would, cut like a knife. Sometimes a person needs to be cut in order to get underneath the surface.

*Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)*¹²*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

V36 – You Killed Him – not Innocent / How could we – Not There / 3000 Knew

Verse 36 - whom you crucified – Peter is saying, you killed Him! Peter said you are by no means innocent. They could have said what do you mean we killed Him, we weren't there, we didn't vote at the trial, we didn't sentence Him to die, we didn't nail Him to the cross, how can you say we killed Him? But for 3,000 they knew they had condemned Him

Heard & Pricked / Every move of Spirit comes with Repentance - Brokenness

The Jews had heard amazing things through the utterance of tongues. They had seen Peter stand up boldly to preach powerfully and persuasively. They heard him use Scripture accurately and irrefutably. As a result, they were pricked in their hearts, just as the Word of God does to those who read it with open hearts (Hebrews 4:12). In every move of the Spirit, every true revival we see all had the elements of people's heart being broken, repentance, and tears. Anything else, was just a move of the flesh. These so-called revivals where there is no repentance, no brokenness, are not of the Lord, but whipped up by man.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) *¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

Years Church Blamed the Jews / Pastor Chuck in Israel

For years the Church has promoted the heresy that the Jews are to blame for Jesus' death, but for the world is looking to blame someone, let them look no further, for I killed Him, it was me, it was my sin, it was my selfishness and selfish desires that nailed Him to the cross. The world has said it was the Jews, and this way of thinking led to the Holocaust. Years ago in a conference in Jerusalem, there was this tension between many churches and groups who had come to the conference (called friends of Israel – even though this was stirring in people's hearts, but they killed Jesus) Chuck Smith was there, and when it came time for him to speak, Chuck said to the group of several thousand, "If you want to blame someone for the death of Jesus Christ, blame me, because it was my sins that put Him on the Cross." The room fell to eerie silence as men and women were pricked and cut to their heart.

Word Cuts / People don't want to Be Cut / My Surgery Tuesday

Peter's words empower by the Holy Spirit cut deep into man's heart on this day. Christian, that is what the word is meant to do. It is the cutting that reveals what is beneath the surface. Many people don't want to be cut, the unrepentant, and even the Christian. The cutting hurts, it is uncomfortable, but it is vitally necessary, Many Christians get cut and ask Jesus for forgiveness and to receive salvation, but then as time passes don't want to be cut again. They don't want to hear they have a failing or shortcoming, and they become upset if anyone cuts them and reveals it. Tuesday I have to go to the dermatologist; after all the years in the sun the doctor says we need to check a few things out, we need to cut a few places and do a biopsy on the tissue. One place is right on my nose, the doctor said I could just freeze that spot, and it would fall off, be none evasive, no pain, no scar, but then we would never know what was beneath the skin, is it cancer, is it something eating away at you that will one day take your life. As much as I wanted to just blow over it, cover it up, I know that I need to be cut so we can get underneath the surface and find out if there is something more there. I have a wife, a teenager, and a baby; I need to make it at least another 20 years, they need me to lead them and to provide for them, so I need to know if there is anything that could hinder or stop me from making I another 20. The cutting spiritually is God's gift to you, His surgery on you, so that you may lead and provide for your family in all their spiritual needs, they need you, for at least another 20. Christian, don't despise the cutting, it is a necessary and vital work of God; He wants to get underneath the surface of things and reveal to you what is underneath so that you may deal with it and go on to life, and that more abundant (John 10:10). The life will be abundant because after the cutting, the Lord applies the blood, the blood of Jesus upon that which has been cut, and the blood will do what the blood does, bring life and healing.

What shall we Do – Is it too Late / Peter says by No means

Verse 37 - What shall we do? - If this is true they are saying, is it too late? What can we do about it now, we remember the crucifixion of Jesus, but we didn't get it, we didn't know what His death meant; now we do, but is it too late? Peter's answer is by no means is it too late.

(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Repentance not Curse Word / Change mind – Change thoughts of Jesus

Repentance is not a curse word, it is the word that delivers us from the curse. To repent simply means to change direction. "You once thought Jesus was a blasphemer, a heretic, a dangerous individual," said Peter. "Change your mind about who He is." Gang, the gospel is not based upon people cleaning up their lives or getting their acts together. The gospel is simply based upon a change of mind concerning Jesus Christ. For many of you, Jesus was no more than a curse word. To others, He was a political revolutionary, a good teacher, or a wise man. But then you heard the Word, you saw the power, and you were pricked in your heart. You had no other recourse but to repent, no other choice but to admit He is the Christ, and you were saved.

No Altar Call – Public Profession / Baptism proof of Sincerity - Ostracized

They were going to go down to the river and give a symbol of sin and the old life as they symbolized burying the old man with his sin, and a new man emerging from the waters (we will talk more of baptism in a future study), but know this, there were no Altar calls in that day, their public profession was to be baptized. Baptism was proof of their sincerity for once they made a public stance for Christ they would become ostracized from the Jewish community. Today there are too many professions of faith, with no proof of sincerity, as a person has absolutely no change in their life. God's sovereignty, man's free-will, once saved always saved, I don't know; all I do know is it is not a debate that I want my eternal salvation to be in.

Baptism not necessary of Salvation

Just a note to those who say that based on this verse, that baptism is necessary for salvation, it should be noted that the thief on the cross was not baptized. All the saints in Hebrews 11 (Hall of Faith) were not baptized. Peter's next sermon doesn't say you need to be baptized. And, when the household of Cornelius (Gentiles) get saved, we read that the Holy Spirit filled them before they were ever baptized. So, it is errant to teach that if a person isn't baptized, they aren't saved, for to do such a thing then places man as doing some type of work, and removing that salvation is 100% based on the finished work of Christ on the cross. To add baptism to the salvation equation is to say that the blood of Jesus Christ alone isn't sufficient enough to save us, and that isn't just errant, to me that is heresy.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV) ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Titus 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

(Acts 2:39 NKJV) "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

2000 Years Later – Promise still for You Today

Verse 39 - *and to all who are afar off* – That is you and me, as we are 2000 years since this word. There are those today who say the gift of the Holy Ghost is no longer available. I disagree. The promise of the Father is to you, your children, and to those who are afar off in coming generations and in other regions. Precious people, don't let anyone deny you the gift and empowering of the Holy Ghost. Don't let them say it's no longer applicable or no longer available. The promise of the Father experienced on the Day of Pentecost is available to you, to your children, and to those who are afar off, regardless of how far spiritually or geographically we might be.

(Acts 2:40 NKJV) And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

(Acts 2:41 NKJV) Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Perverse – Save self from Religious System / Temple right around the Corner

Perverse generation (also translated – twisted generation). Save yourself from this religious system, just around the corner at the Temple they are going through a religious ritual, but right here is the way to eternal life.

3000 saved – 3000 Died

Interestingly three thousand people died the day the law was given (Exodus 32:28). But on the day the Spirit was given, three thousand were saved (Acts 2:41).

Exodus 32:28 (NKJV)²⁸*So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day.*

Acts 2:41 (NKJV)⁴¹*Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.*

Be Free

Do you want to be free, have you been set free?

Luke 4:17-19 (NKJV)¹⁷*And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:*

¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

John 8:36 (NKJV)³⁶*Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

Video – Set Me Free

Remaining Steadfast (The 4 Pillars of the Church)

2:42-47

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Ascended-Descended-Presented / 3000 Saved / Now What?

Jesus has ascended, the Holy Spirit has descended, and Peter has presented. The resultant as we saw in the last study was 3,000 people coming into the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Now what the disciples may have asked? The Church has just grown from 120 to 3,000 in just a few short minutes; many will stay in Jerusalem, and many will return home, so immediately the question would be, now what? Where do we meet, how many chairs will we need, should we have a choir, if so should they wear robes, what about childcare, how do we support the staff, where can we find enough scrolls of the Torah, what are those returning back to homes outside of Jerusalem to do? In a matter of 5 minutes they have all these issues to consider, pondering and asking, now what?

(Acts 2:41 NKJV) Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them

Lord's Answer – Remain Steadfast / Steadfast in Doctrine – Fellowship – Bread - Prayer

The Lord's answer (via the Holy Spirit) as we see in our text today, "*Remain Steadfast*"; remain steadfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers, and all the other stuff will work itself out. Acts 2:42 is called the 4 pillars of the church,

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

The 4 Pillars of the Church:

- Apostles' Doctrine (the Word)
- Fellowship
- Breaking of Bread (Communion)
- Prayers.

Recap 6 – Add the 7th

Acts 2:42 is called the 4 pillars of the church, but it is important to recap the 6 keys to power we have already studied in these first two chapters, and today we will add the seventh, "*Remaining Steadfast*".

6 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)

Look Closely – 4 Pillars in the 6 Keys / 1-6 – Release of the Holy Spirit

If you look closely, you will see that the four pillars (of remaining steadfast) are covered under the first 6. The resurrection power is remembered and refreshed when we break bread (communion). The consciousness of the ever-present God, found in the Word, fellowshiping one with another as we see Christ in other people, at the Lord's table, and in prayer as we talk with Him, and He to us, we experience His presence. Being filled with the Holy Spirit, will naturally happen when we are steadfastly continually doing these 4 things. Prayer is prayer, and the Word is the Word, and tremendous power is found in them, and they release the Holy Spirit within our lives.

Don't Tune Out – Ho Hum – Something New / Titanic – Unsinkable – Weak Rivets

I hope you don't tune-out in this message, ho hum, know these things, tell me something new. Well here is something new, after almost 100 years. Some of the remains of the Titanic's hull were brought to the surface for analysis. You remember the Titanic, the Titanic left Southampton, England, on April 10, 1912 on its ill-fated maiden voyage. Deemed unsinkable, said that even God couldn't sink the Titanic; more than 1,500 people died when the Titanic, advertised as an "unsinkable" luxury liner, struck an iceberg on its maiden voyage in 1912 and went down in the North Atlantic less than three hours later.

The tragic sinking of the Titanic nearly a century ago can be blamed on low-grade rivets that the ship's builders used on some parts of the ill-fated liner, two experts on metals conclude in a new book. The two metallurgists tested 48 rivets from the ship and found that slag concentrations were at 9 percent, when they should have been 2 to 3 percent. The slag is a byproduct of the smelting process. "You need the slag but you need just a little to take up the load that's applied so the iron doesn't stretch," Foecke said. "The iron becomes weak the more slag there is because the brittleness of the slag takes over and it breaks easily." The Titanic was 1 of 3 ships the company was to build. Harland and Wolff of Belfast, Northern Ireland, needed to build the ship quickly and at reasonable cost, which may have compromised quality, said co-author Timothy Foecke. That the shipyard was building two other vessels at the same time added to the difficulty of getting the millions of rivets needed, he added. "Under the pressure to get these ships up, they ramped up the riveters, found materials from additional suppliers, and some was not of quality," said Foecke, a metallurgist at the U.S. government's National Institute of Standards and Technology who has been studying the Titanic for a decade. "The company knowingly purchased weaker rivets, but I think they did it not knowing they would be purchasing something substandard enough that when they hit an iceberg their ship would sink," said co-author Jennifer Hooper McCarty, who started researching the Titanic's rivets while working on her Ph.D. at Johns Hopkins University in 1999. The company disputes the idea that inferior rivets were at fault. The theory has been around for years, but McCarty and Foecke's book, "What Really Sank the Titanic," published last month, outlines their extensive research into the Harland and Wolff archives and surviving rivets from the Titanic. McCarty spent two years in Britain studying the company's archives and works on the training and working conditions of shipyard workers. She and Foecke also studied engineering textbooks from the 1890s and early 1900s to learn more about shipbuilding practices and materials. "I had the opportunity to study the metallurgy of several rivets," McCarty said. "It was a process of taking thousands of images of the inside of these rivets, finding out what the structure was like, doing chemical testing and computer modeling. "Seeing the kind of levels we saw in different areas, in different parts of the ship led us to believe they would have ordered from different people," she said, adding this may have led to the weaker rivets. Foecke said the main question was not whether the Titanic would sink after hitting the iceberg, but how fast the ship went down. He believes the answer is provided by the weak rivets. His analysis showed the builders used stronger steel rivets where they expected the greatest stress and weaker iron rivets for the stern and the bow, where they thought there would be less pressure, he said. But it was the ship's bow that struck the iceberg. "Typically you want a four bar for rivets," Foecke said, using the measurement for the strongest rivets. "Some of the orders were for three bar." Harland and Wolff spokesman Joris Minne disputed the findings. "We always say there was nothing wrong with the Titanic when it left here," he said. When the iceberg hit the Titanic, it scraped alongside the ship. Foecke said this affected a number of seams in the bow and the weak rivets let go, putting more pressure on the strong rivets. "Six compartments flooded. If the rivets were on average better quality, five compartments may have flooded and the ship would have stayed afloat longer and more people would have been saved," Foecke said. "If four compartments flooded, the ship may have limped to Halifax." The company does not have an archivist, but it refers scientific questions on the Titanic to retired Harland and Wolff naval engineer David Livingstone, who also has researched the ship's sinking. He said he largely agrees with the authors' findings on the metallic composition of the rivets, but added their conclusions that the rivets were to blame for the sinking are "misleading and incorrect" because they do not consider the ship's overall design and the historical context. "You can't just look at the material and say it was substandard," Livingstone said. "Of course material from 100 years ago would be inferior to material today." He said he had found no document to support the argument that Harland and Wolff knowingly used substandard material. He pointed out that the Olympic, a ship the company built at the same time using the same materials, had a long life with no troubles. The third vessel turned out in the early 1900s was attacked and sunk in World War I. Livingstone said he was not sure why iron rivets were used in the bow and the stern but believed it may have been because a crane-mounted hydraulic rivet machine could not reach those points. He said the iron rivets were wider to compensate for the difference in strength. Contrary to Foecke's theory, Livingstone said, the Titanic did not go down fast compared to other ships that have sunk. He said the Titanic did not capsize -- as do most sinking ships -- but maintained an even keel until the last moment, going down after about two and a half hours when the weight of the water it took on became too much. William Garzke, chairman of the forensics panel of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers based in New Jersey, said wrought iron was commonly used at that time, but steel was the newer, stronger choice. Garzke, who also has studied the Titanic sinking, said the two scientists made a good point about the variability of

the rivets, but "the problem is not the metallurgy of the rivets, it was the design of the riveted joints." He said that the company used only two rivets at the site of impact, when three would have provided more strength and durability.

Although Solid Steel – Held together by Rivets

Although the Titanic was surrounded by thick solid steel, it still had to be held together by these rivets. In the end the Titanic was only as strong as the rivets, and when the rivets turned out to be of poor quality, excessive slag, of weak strength, the thick solid walls of steel were of no help from keeping the ship from sinking to the ocean floor, along with 1500 souls. I will suggest to you these 4 pillars of our study today, are the rivets of our faith. We have thick solid walls of steel in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit surrounding us, but the rivets of our faith (the Word, Fellowship, Communion, and Prayer) are what keeps and holds the solid steel of the Trinity around us.

How Strong

How strong are your rivets?

Peter said – Be Saved from Perverse Generation / Plenty making Professions - Backslide

Peter said be saved, be freed from this perverse generation, and 3,000 responded. People are free from this perverse generation, now how do they remain free. Plenty a people today making professions for Christ, detaching themselves from this perverse world, only to find themselves months or years later being drawn back into it. The Lord says to be saved from this perverse generation, and to remain separated from it.

(Acts 2:40 NKJV) And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

Separate Self / Word used for warped Board – Only good for Fire / All going to Burn

Peter said to separate yourself from this perverse (warped) generation. This word was used for a board that was not start, and the carpenter would throw it aside and later throw it into the fire, for the wood was useless for anything else. Peter is saying separate yourself from this world's system that is going to burn.

Once Separated – Stay Separated

And once you do, stay separated, how - the Lord tells us here in verse 42, these 4 pillars:

The 4 Pillars of the Church:

- Apostles' Doctrine (the Word)
- Fellowship
- Breaking of Bread (Communion)
- Prayers.

Decision for Steadfastness Today / Execute a Plan before Leave on these 4 Areas

Today make a decision for more steadfastness, respond to the message today. Do not table the decision for later, but before this message is over, conclude in your mind what you are going to do, implement a plan, and how and when you are going to execute your plan. Have a plan in place before you leave today of how you are going to establish, sure-up, secure – steadfastness in your life in these 4 areas.

The 4 Pillars of the Church

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

(Acts 2:43 NKJV) Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

(Acts 2:44 NKJV) Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, (Acts 2:45 NKJV) and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

(Acts 2:46 NKJV) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

(Acts 2:47 NKJV) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

They remained steadfast in these 4 areas:

The 4 Pillars of the Church:

- Apostles' Doctrine (the Word)
- Fellowship
- Breaking of Bread (Communion)
- Prayers.

Steadfastly - Definition

They continued steadfastly, here is the definition of steadfast:

Steadfastly - proskartereo, pros-kar-ter-eh'-o; from G4314 and G2594; to be earnest towards, i.e. (to a thing) to persevere, be constantly diligent, or (in a place) to attend assiduously all the exercises, or (to a person) to adhere closely to (as a servitor):--attend (give self) continually (upon), continue (in, instant in, with), wait on (continually).

Persevere – to persist in pursuing something in spite of obstacles, opposition, difficulties or discouragement.

Steadfastly – Cargo Ship

The word for steadfastly has been used in the context of “to continue/hold under pressure”. It has been likened to a cargo ship heading in to a storm, and crew tightens the cables in order that the containers do not topple over and fall into the sea. The cargo must be steadfast to make it through the storm.

Imbedded in our Identities / Non-Negotiable

One of the things we as Christians lose so fast in the storms, in the distractions, in the hurried and business of life are the very basics. These four pillars are the very qualities that need to be deeply imbedded in our identities. These are things we are going to hold on to no matter what. Whether the seas are choppy, smooth or a raging storm. These qualities are non-negotiable, and we fasten them down in our lives so that no storm or blue skies, can topple them over and allow them to fall into the sea.

Apostles' Doctrine

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Doctrine – What you Believe

Doctrine – what you believe and why. The doctrine spoken of here is the doctrine that was taught by the apostles.

- the doctrine of salvation,
- the doctrine of the Trinity,
- the doctrine of eternal life,
- the doctrine of eternal punishment,
- the doctrine of end time things,
- and the likes there of.

The Inspiration of God / One message in perfect Unity

And all this doctrine is formed by the inspiration of God. This one message in perfect unity that never contradicts itself. We studied on the inspiration of the word in a past study, we have spoken about in the uniqueness of the Bible and why we can trust in the inspiration of the Scriptures (notes available on-line).

Teaching Through Bible

How important it is that we continue to teach through the Bible verse-by-verse, chapter-by-chapter. For it was the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, and now it is not that we are going through the Bible, but that the Bible (the Word) is going through us, as the Word dwells in us: *(John 1:14 NKJV) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Early Church wanted Apostles Doctrine / Grabbed Heart / Sensed they been with Jesus

Do you notice that in the early church, the people didn't just want any doctrine, for there was plenty of doctrine flying around in this time, plenty of philosophy, but the people wanted the apostle's doctrine. They saw a doctrine that grabbed their hearts and made them want it to be a part of their lives. They sensed and knew that these apostles had been with Jesus, experienced Jesus, and they wanted what they had

They saw Freedom – Life - Passion

These people could see a freedom in the church, a passion, a life and living hope in the apostle's doctrine. Not just a story, not just a bunch of rules, or the latest Oprah book-of-the-month, but it was a life and a life that was more abundant. The Apostles had a freedom and they said do to us as you wish, but we can't stop talking about our Jesus, even if you beat and pound us we can't stop talking about Jesus.

(Acts 4:13 NKJV) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

(Acts 4:14 NKJV) And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

(Acts 4:15 NKJV) But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

(Acts 4:16 NKJV) saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

(Acts 4:17 NKJV) "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

(Acts 4:18 NKJV) And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

(Acts 4:19 NKJV) But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

(Acts 4:20 NKJV) "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

There are People want to be Involved – Then they See

There are people who want to be involved in a group, with some identity, some cause (just look at the world around you). They see something in someone and say I want what they have. I want to be a part of that.

Early Church Saw – You Know – Experienced / Tell me how I can Too

The early church says we want your doctrine, we see the life that is in you, we can see you know Him, you have experienced Him, and they said tell me how you came to know Him, tell me how I can know Him the same way, teach me.

Doctrine had Reality to It / I want to go where you Go

This doctrine had a reality to it, this doctrine would have people say I want to go where you have gone I want to go where you were going.

So too Today / We have Word's of Life / Our Passion - the Word in Us

So too is it today, that people will look and say what is it about your doctrine that makes you so different. Why is it that you live so differently from others? Why do you have such peace, joy, passion, excitement, and love? What is it about your doctrine, tell me, and teach me, I want to go where you are going.

Precious People – we have the Words of Life

Precious people, we have the words of life. We have the words of life, and when we become passionate about this word, the Word that became flesh and dwells in us, then people will say, "I want your doctrine, tell me what it is."

Fellowship

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Koinonia – Communion – Partnership

The Greek word - koinonia, koy-nohn-ee'-ah; from G2844; partnership, i.e. (lit.) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction:--(to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-), distribution, fellowship.

Social Intercourse – We are in this Together – Journey Together

This Koinonia, this oneness, this communion, this partnership. We are adults, we can handle this, this social intercourse. Put aside the demented world view, and see this word art before us. This word likens fellowship to two people becoming one, they are so intimate, they become one. We are in this together, we are on this journey together.

To be in Business Together – Share same Interest / Business of the Lord

Koinonia – also means to be in business with, to share the same interest, share the same goals with. We are to be in business with the Lord Jesus, about the Father's business, to share the same interest, to share the same goals.

Luke 2:49 (NKJV) ⁴⁹And He said to them, *"Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"*

When sharing same Goals – find Joy / Theme found in these 4 – Joy / Release of Spirit

It will be in the fellowship, the sharing of the same goals, being about our Father's business that we will find joy (1 Corinthians 1:1:9). We will find a theme in this study today, and that is that is a theme of joy, and joy will be found when we are doing these 4 things. These 4 pillars release the Holy Spirit in our lives, and the fruit of the spirit is, love, peace, and JOY!. If your life lacks joy, go back and check the rivets.

1 Corinthians 1:9 (NKJV) ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Robbed Joy – What Common Interest – Unbeliever / Warning – Stay Separated

Important for me to note, especially if you want to be robbed of joy, what common interest could a believer have with someone of the world (unbeliever), what common business could they share, common interest, common goals could they have. There lies the warning to stay separated from this world, for what common Lord do they serve, if their lord is not your Lord

2 Cor 6:14 – what fellowship (warning to stay separate)

2 Corinthians 6:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? ¹⁵And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

Sharing Life

One of the sweetest definitions of fellowship that I've heard is that of "sharing life". That is truly what we are doing with one another as we are sharing life together. We are a family, we draw strength from one another, we help each other along this walk. Fellowship is a refreshing oil:

(Psalms 133:1 NKJV) Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!

(Psalms 133:2 NKJV) It is like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments.

(Psalms 133:3 NKJV) It is like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing; Life forevermore.

(Proverbs 27:17 NKJV) As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Verse 46 – these 4 pillars – They were Glad & Singleness of Heart

With these 4 principles it says in verse 46, they were glad, and they had simplicity (which means singleness) of heart.

(Acts 2:46 NKJV) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

Back to our Rivets – Singleness means “Unalloyed” / Alloy weakens Steel

Back to our rivets, singleness means, “unalloyed” which is a pure metal, absent of alloy which weakens and cheapens steel, the kind of metal you want to build a building with. The alloy that was absent from them, was the alloy of the world, they were in unity with one another.

Deeper than Church Fellowship

This *koinonia* means more than just getting together at the church I might add, there are other fellowshiping we are called to as believers:

- The fellowship of the Gospel:
Philippians 1:3-6 (NKJV) ³I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ;
- The fellowship with Spirit:
Philippians 2:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
- The fellowship of His suffering:
Philippians 3:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,
- The fellowship of ministering to the Saints:
2 Corinthians 8:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, ⁴imploping us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And, the communion table is fellowshiping with the Lord (next point).

Breaking of Bread

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Lord's Supper / Foundation – Cleansing – Start Over - Perspective

The breaking of bread speaks the Lord's Supper. It speaks of coming back to the very foundation of the Christian faith, and that is the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it is the remembrance of Him being ever-present with us. It is a place of cleansing, a place they/we get to come back to start all over again, daily if necessary. We get to go back to the Cross and put life back into perspective.

The Life is in the Blood

The life is in the blood, it was a prophetic picture of the Lamb of God who would bring us into "atonement", at one-ment, through the blood of the Lamb. In communion we get to do that, and do it in remembrance of Him and His great love for us:

(Leviticus 17:11 NKJV) 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

(John 6:53 NKJV) Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.

(John 6:54 NKJV) "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

(John 6:55 NKJV) "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.

(John 6:56 NKJV) "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.

(John 6:57 NKJV) "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.

(John 6:58 NKJV) "This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."

Prayers.

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Definition

Prayer - proseuche, pros-yoo-khay'; from G4336; prayer (worship); by impl. an oratory (chapel):-- X pray earnestly, prayer.

Oratory Chapel / Sharing Life

I like that, an oratory chapel. The moment we pray, we are immediately brought into a sanctuary, a place of worship, and we can be ministered to by the Living God. The God who says let us commune together, let us fellowship together, and let us share life together. We will talk more of this in a future study.

Guy at Work Confuses who my Son Is

I have to tell you this story, last week I was walking down the hall at work, and this guy passes me, acts like we have known each other for ever and says, hey how about those Atlanta Braves? I'm like ahh, yep they are something (saying to myself this guy must love the Braves to yell it out to a total stranger). Then a week later I'm rushing to another meeting, pass him in the hall, same look like we really know each other, and he says how does your boy like those Braves (I'm thinking Wayne and Camden) and I say well he likes the Orioles. The guy says that's alright, he'll love playing for the Braves. As I get out to my car it finally hits me, there is a man at work, whose son plays professional baseball, for the Braves (last year the Rangers), and this guy thinks I'm him. Now if my son makes it to the big leagues, I expect that he will see to it that I never have to go to work again; but as for this man he thinks we have a connection through the son, but we don't because he has the wrong son. Good example for anyone who thinks they can have a connection with and to God the Father, enter into a conversation with Him, apart from having the right son. Now, the good news for those who have the right son, the Father is so ready for conversation with you. I've been late for many a meetings at work when I pass someone in the hall and they say, Ray how is Wayne doing in football, lacrosse; how old is Camden now, and well, the meeting isn't that interesting to me as it is to talk about my sons. The Father can't wait to talk to us about the Son, about us, about whatever is going on in our life. He wants to "Fellowship" with us, through our time of prayer, He wants to have the intimacy of "social intercourse", to unite with us.

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Chapel open 24x7

The Oratory Chapel is open 24x7 I might add.

Fresh Manna

The chapel is open 24x7 because yesterday's prayers were for yesterday. Now don't take what I am going to say next as Bible doctrine, but my personal experience in the fellowship of prayer, and that is that I look at prayer as the manna that the children of Israel ate in the wilderness, that manna was only good for that day, and then the next day they would go out and get fresh new manna to supply them for that day. Lamentations 3:23-26, the Lord says His mercies are new every morning, great is His faithfulness. We should be looking for fresh manna every morning, looking for what new thing the Lord has for us for that day, not yesterday (yesterday supplied yesterday, now let today supply today); Christian, look for something new from the Lord every day. He will give it to you; to the church in Smyrna, He said I will give you the hidden manna to eat, and the hidden manna is Jesus Himself as He ascribed in John 6. Daily, we need to come to Him, and seek a fresh new revelation of Him, not day old Jesus, but the Living God – Today! Fellowship, Koinonia – with the Living God through prayer, and the Spirit of God will be released in a mighty way in our life.

Exodus 16:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹And Moses said, "Let no one leave any of it till morning." ²⁰Notwithstanding they did not heed Moses. But some of them left part of it until morning, and it bred worms and stank. And Moses was angry with them.

²¹So they gathered it every morning, every man according to his need. And when the sun became hot, it melted.

Lamentations 3:22-26 (NKJV) ²² Through the LORD'S mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.

²³ They are new every morning;

Great is Your faithfulness.

²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"

²⁵ The LORD is good to those who wait for Him,
To the soul who seeks Him.

²⁶ It is good that one should hope and wait quietly
For the salvation of the LORD.

Revelation 2:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat.

John 6:49-51 (NKJV) ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

(Acts 2:43 NKJV) Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

(Acts 2:44 NKJV) Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common,
(Acts 2:45 NKJV) and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

(Acts 2:46 NKJV) So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

(Acts 2:47 NKJV) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Filled with Joy / Should you be in Place of Lost Joy / Here is the Simple Return Checklist

They were filled with joy and simplicity of heart. Should you, or if you are, in the place where you say to yourself, I have lost my joy, or I remember a time when I was filled with joy, I was glad to be saved and serving the Lord, but now I feel dry, I have no joy, I fill serving is work rather than worship; how did I get here, and how do I get back? Praise the Lord for He gives us a simple checklist on how to get back to that place, or get to the start of that place if you have never been there.

Recap

4 Pillars / Deeply Imbedded – Must be Steadfast / Nothing can Topple Them

These four pillars are the very qualities that need to be deeply imbedded in our identities. These are things we are going to hold on to no matter what. Whether the seas are choppy, smooth or a raging storm. These qualities are non-negotiable, and we fasten them down in our lives so that no storm or blue skies, can topple them over and allow them to fall into the sea, we must be steadfast in them.

4 Pillars – the Rivets of our Faith

These 4 pillars of our study today, are the rivets of our faith. We have thick solid walls of steel in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit surrounding us, but the rivets of our faith (the Word, Fellowship, Communion, and Prayer) are what keeps and holds the solid steel of the Trinity around us.

The 4 Pillars of the Church:

- Apostles' Doctrine (the Word)
- Fellowship
- Breaking of Bread (Communion)
- Prayers.

21 Days to Form a Habit / Make a Decision Today

They say it takes 21 days to form a habit, how about we round that off to 30 so that we make sure this habit becomes part of our very spiritual DNA! Today make a decision for more steadfastness, respond to the message today. Do not table the decision for later, but before this message is over, conclude in your mind what you are going to do, implement a plan, and how and when you are going to execute your plan. Have a plan in place before you leave today of how you are going to establish, sure-up, secure – steadfastness in your life in these 4 areas.

Evangelism – He Who Wins Souls is Wise (2:1-41)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Last Study – 4 Pillars – Add 5th / Grows Church and Christian / Wins Souls Wise - Power

In our last study we covered the 4 Pillars (rivets) of the Church; but as I have often said, I add a 5th, and that is Evangelism, for evangelism is not only a pillar of the church, but our own personal growth in the Lord. Evangelism doesn't just grow the church, but it also grows us individually spiritually. Proverbs says that he who wins souls is wise, and there are many reasons we will be wise, but for time sake I will keep it in the context of our study here in Acts, and the wisdom of evangelizing, is that it will bring power into your life, and thus we add key number 8 to our list. *(Proverbs 11:30 NKJV) The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who wins souls is wise.*

8 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)
- They found Power in Evangelism (2:1-41)

Wait a Minute / Power to Evangelize & Evangelism brings Power / Recap 7 Keys

Wait a minute you may say, we need power to evangelize, not evangelism brings power; actually it is both! We absolutely need the power of the Holy Spirit to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ and bring it into a spiritual language that a person can clearly hear and understand. But evangelism brings a power into a believer's life, for as we evangelize it brings into reality the 7 keys of power we have discussed. Jesus Christ, this Christian walk will continually be real for we will continually be calling on, relying on, those 7 keys to power we have studied.

- You can't help but experience the resurrection as you speak of the resurrection;
- You can't help but experience His presence as you speak about Him;
- God empowers His witness with His Holy Spirit;
- You will be looking for His soon return because evangelism detaches us from this world and puts in the forefront of our mind that hell is real, and time is short to get this word out;
- Prayer will become part of your life for we will never want to do this alone;
- We will be drawn into the word because we will continually get asked questions that we won't know the answers to (or have forgotten them) and will see our need to get in and stay in the word;
- Obviously, with all these things just spoken, we will be driven to "remain steadfast".

Do the Work of Evangelist / 2 Tim 4:5 / Call for us Today

Paul gave Timothy the charge, do the work of an evangelist, and the charge is also for us today:

(2 Timothy 4:5 NKJV) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Not just for Professional / Equipping of Saints

Evangelism is not only for the "professional", it is the calling of every Believer, and thus God equips His saints for the work of the ministry. You see God gives to the Church gifted teachers, who teach the body of believers on how to do the work of the ministry. So the Lord doesn't give the church an evangelist per say, but someone who can teach the church how to evangelize, and the multiplication factor than takes effect.

(Ephesians 4:11 NKJV) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

(Ephesians 4:12 NKJV) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Video – Linebacker Evangelism

Way God made Us – His Marvelous Design / Evangelize or Fossilize / Feeling Dry?

Christian, it is the way God has made us, His marvelous design, that we would be a people that share our faith. I have watched it in the life of Christians, and in my own life, and that is if we do not evangelize, then we fossilize. We either evangelize or fossilize, we either share or we start to dry-up. If you are getting dry in your Christian walk, and you say I pray, I read, I fellowship, but I still find myself become creaky and cranky, then maybe you are fossilizing because you are not evangelizing. Watch and see that when you do, you will find yourself revived and refreshed again in your walk with the Lord, and besides those that, the world needs this message, and we have the words of life! Give Life! (See the addendum of William Booth's vision at the bottom of study).

1st Sermon - New Church / Advance Technology - Needs still Same

Peter's sermon, the first sermon of the new Church, is masterful, and we can glean a lot from it. For although man has advanced greatly technologically in the 2000 years, the needs of man have not changed at all. Peter's sermon is a classic prototype on Evangelism.

Peter's Message - Great Sermon / Pulpit or Adaptable to One-on-One / 3000 Saved

Although Peter's message here was in the pulpit setting, and is an excellent model for those that serve in that type of setting, the model is very adaptable to one-on-one evangelism. This is truly one of the greatest sermons ever preached; in model, and in response, as 3,000 responded to this message of salvation.

Principles Used Here - So we are Effective / Maybe feel Ineffective

Let's look at the principles used here in this message, and look for application into our own personal evangelism, so that our evangelism may be effective.

Challenge – Make a Plan – Who, When, Where / If Wait – Probably won't Come

And may I challenge you with this, that before this message is over, you will have a plan on who you will share the gospel with (friend, family, the stranger on the street), where you will do it (call them for coffee, meet them at the park, send them a letter), and when you will do it. If you say when the opportunity arises, I will say to you, it is doubtful that it will. Jesus said "go therefore, not wait and see". Your challenge, should you decide to accept it, is to do it within the next 30 days. So for you today, who, where, and when.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Moving into our Study / Message Great for 7 Reasons / Ours will be Great Too

Now moving into our study, we will see that Peter's message was great for 7 reasons (7 being the number of completion); Peter preached a complete message, and leaves us a great model for evangelism, points to remember for ourselves when we proclaim the gospel. Peter's message was great, and yours will be too, if you remember these 7 points.

Peters Message was Great Because:

- 1st - Peter Knew his Audience
- 2nd - It was Scriptural
- 3rd - It was Christ Centered
- 4th - It had a Logical Flow
- 5th - He had Boldness
- 6th - It was Repentance Based
- 7th - Peter Preached for a Decision

1st - Peter Knew his Audience

(Acts 2:1 NKJV) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

(Acts 2:2 NKJV) And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

(Acts 2:3 NKJV) Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.

(Acts 2:4 NKJV) And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

(Acts 2:5 NKJV) And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

(Acts 2:6 NKJV) And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

(Acts 2:7 NKJV) Then they were all amazed and marveled, saying to one another, "Look, are not all these who speak Galileans?"

(Acts 2:8 NKJV) "And how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born?"

(Acts 2:9 NKJV) "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

(Acts 2:10 NKJV) "Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

(Acts 2:11 NKJV) "Cretans and Arabs; we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."

(Acts 2:12 NKJV) So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "Whatever could this mean?"

(Acts 2:13 NKJV) Others mocking said, "They are full of new wine."

(Acts 2:14 NKJV) But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.

1st - Peter Knew his Audience / Familiar with Scriptures / Biblically Illiterate / 10 Commands

Let's look at Peter's message, and why it was great. First it was great because Peter knew his audience. Peter knew who he was talking and made the message relevant to them and their knowledge of God. Peter knew these people and knew they were familiar with the Scriptures. He could reference Joel, King David, and the people would have some understanding of what he was saying. Today we probably live in the most Biblically illiterate culture in the history of mankind. When I share the gospel I use the 10 commandments as a mirror to show the person they are sinners, but I had to change that several years ago when I would share the gospel, and ask the person, you remember the 10 commandments, and they would say - no. So I would have to define the 10 Commandments to them and for them.

Important to Define Terms as we Speak / Read there Face to see if Tracking

So it is important for us when we share the gospel to define our terms as we go. As we share it is important to read their face to determine if they are tracking with us, or do they have that blank stare.

Age - Where at in Life / Build a Bridge - Cultural Relevance / Life Events – Turn Attention

Obviously I need to know my audience for their age, I'll share differently from a child, to a teen, to an adult, and to the elderly. I look at where they are in life and try to build a bridge to them to make the gospel relevant to them. I'll use where they are at in life to initially engage them. To the student I'll say if you are researching all the academics you owe it yourself to research the claims of Jesus Christ - your eternity is at stake. To the elderly I'll be bold enough to say when it comes time to die make sure that is all you have to do, determine your eternity long before you die. To the middle age I know many are still empty even after they have a career, have kids, have the home, and I try to use those things to meet them where they are at. America struggled with questions after 9/11, where was God, how could He allow this, why are these people terrorizing the world, there are hurricane victims, those with cancer, those who have job losses, soldiers going to war, and the likes, for that very event in their life may be the event that turns someone's attention to the things of God. For these people the event was the day of Pentecost, they had questions. Peter knew his audience and so should we.

2nd - It was Scriptural

(Acts 2:15 NKJV) "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.

(Acts 2:16 NKJV) "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

(Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

(Acts 2:19 NKJV) I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.

(Acts 2:20 NKJV) The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

(Acts 2:21 NKJV) And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'

2nd - Great because Scriptural / Heb 4:12 / Ish 55 / Give them Word – Gave them Christ

Secondly Peter's message was great because Peter message was Scriptural. The Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than a 2 edge sword, and it will not return void. Give them Scripture, leave them Scripture, and you left them God Himself (for the Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us). Give them the Word, you give them Christ, give them Christ and you will hear those words "well done good and faithful servant", regardless of their response. God's word will not return void, so every time you give them a verse, that verse stands. Be careful not to give many of your words, and few of God's, keep them in the Scriptures.

(Hebrews 4:12 NKJV) For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

(Hebrews 4:13 NKJV) And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

(Isaiah 55:10 NKJV) "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater,

(Isaiah 55:11 NKJV) So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Preach the Word - in Season - Out of Season / Prayer will Keep you in Season

It is important to note here that Peter was ready, just as Paul would say to Timothy, preach the Word, be ready in season and out of season, Peter was ready. Peter is one of the greatest Biblical examples of being ready in season and out of season. No one told him that on Sunday, June xyz, you will be preaching. Peter was ready, in season and out of season. I might note, you'll always be in season if the word and prayer are part of your daily habit, for you'll be in the Spirit and not the flesh.

(2 Timothy 4:2 NKJV) Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

(2 Timothy 4:3 NKJV) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;

(2 Timothy 4:4 NKJV) and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

(2 Timothy 4:5 NKJV) But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

3rd – It was Christ Centered

(Acts 2:22 NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know;

(Acts 2:23 NKJV) "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death;

(Acts 2:24 NKJV) "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

(Acts 2:25 NKJV) "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

(Acts 2:26 NKJV) Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.

(Acts 2:27 NKJV) For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

(Acts 2:28 NKJV) You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

(Acts 2:29 NKJV) "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day

(Acts 2:30 NKJV) "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

(Acts 2:31 NKJV) "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

(Acts 2:32 NKJV) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

(Acts 2:33 NKJV) "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.

(Acts 2:34 NKJV) "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand,

(Acts 2:35 NKJV) Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

(Acts 2:36 NKJV) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

3rd - Christ Centered

Thirdly, Peter's message was great because it was Christ centered:

(Acts 2:22 NKJV) "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know;

(Acts 2:24 NKJV) "whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.

(Acts 2:31 NKJV) "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption.

(Acts 2:32 NKJV) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

(Acts 2:36 NKJV) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Jesus Christ & Him Crucified / The Resurrection – Power of the Gospel / Krishna - Smith

He spoke of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter kept the focus on Jesus, he kept pointing everything back to Jesus. Peter didn't dwell on them, the Roman

occupation, the declining economy, but Jesus. Peter didn't try to reason out Judaism and Christianity, not Calvinism and Armenianism, nor Catholicism and Protestantism. Not did Peter spend time giving his personal testimony, he just kept pointing back to Christ. Now giving your testimony is great, for it is proof of the power of God working in a person's life, but all too often people give 30 minutes of their testimony, and 30 seconds of Jesus; back to point two, leave them the Word, for it will not return void. Peter's message was also steeped in the resurrection of Christ, rightly so the power of the gospel is the resurrection. Mohammed died, Krishna died, Joseph Smith died, but none of them rose again. When we present the gospel let us not just talk of the death of Jesus for man's sin, but we must speak of the resurrection for therein lies the power of the gospel, that sin and death could not hold Jesus in the grave, nor will it hold those who are in Him

(1 Corinthians 2:2 NKJV) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

(1 Corinthians 15:3 NKJV) For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,

(1 Corinthians 15:4 NKJV) and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

4th – It had a Logical Flow

Logical Flow / Feast of Israel

Peter's message was great because it had a logical flow to it. Peter knowing his audience logically walked them through the first four Feast of Israel (please see our prior study notes). The flow took them through Jesus trading places with them as the Passover Lamb (Passover), then the grave couldn't hold Him (Feast of Unleavened Bread), that Jesus rose from the dead (Feast of Firstfruits); and that current day, the promise that all who believe will be saved and brought into the harvest (Feast of Pentecost). These hearers could understand the message because it was logical, and it was presented in a logical flow.

THE 7 FEASTS OF ISRAEL

THE SPRING FEASTS

1. THE PASSOVER
2. THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD
3. THE FEAST OF FIRSTFRUITS

THE SUMMER FEAST

4. THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

THE FALL FEASTS OF ISRAEL

5. THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS
6. THE DAY OF ATONEMENT
7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

Ready at Moments Notice - Scriptural Gospel / Logical Flow / 5 P's

I believe every Christian should be ready at a moment's notice, to present a scripturally based gospel logically. I refer you to our teaching on the (5 P's - Personal - Problem - Penalty - Provision - Profession) (teaching notes on the website). Every P has a verse associated with it, and it helps keep you presenting the gospel clearly, logically, and scripturally. Every Christian should know his scripture associated with the gospel, and if I was to point to you right now you would be able to stand and give a logical scripturally based presentation of the gospel.

The 5 P's

Personal - Problem - Penalty - Provision - Profession

God loves you and has a plan for your life, He says in the scriptures I know the thoughts that I think towards you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil (Jer 29:11).

(Jeremiah 29:11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

(Psalm 56:8) You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?

(Matthew 10:30) "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

Personal - **Problem** - Penalty - Provision - Profession

But as much as God thinks of you and loves you there is a problem, and the problem is that you sin separates you from Him the Holy God, for the scriptures say all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). I'll use the 10 commandments here to bring them to the place to show them that they are guilty of breaking God's Holy law, and that they have offended the Holy God, and that there is a penalty to pay for such an offense.

(Romans 3:23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Personal - Problem - **Penalty** - Provision - Profession

With that problem comes a penalty for offending the Holy God, and the scriptures say for the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

(Romans 6:23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Personal - Problem - Penalty - **Provision** - Profession

But God does not want you to be separated from Him and He has provide a way to punish your sin and forgiven you at the same time, and that is that He took the punishment due to, for the scriptures say that God demonstrated His love towards us that while we were still yet sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8), for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whomsoever should believe Him shall not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

(Romans 5:8) But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Personal - Problem - Penalty - Provision - **Profession**

This is what God has done for you, and now to receive this free gift of forgiveness you must make a profession, for the scriptures say if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raises Him from the dead, then you shall be saved (Romans 10:9). Therein lies the power of this gospel for anyone can die, but only Jesus rose from the dead and is proof that God accepted this substitution because Jesus broke the power of death and rose again on the third day. The resurrection is proof that God accepted the substitution.

(Romans 10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Profession: **Recognize** – Repent - Receive

To profess you must be willing to recognize that you are a sinner and have offend the Holy God, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23),

(Romans 3:23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Profession: Recognize – **Repent** - Receive

You must be willing to repent, which is to turn from your sin, your way, and follow the ways of the Lord, for the scriptures say repent therefore and be converted so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19).

(Acts 3:19): "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Profession: Recognize – Repent - **Receive**

And lastly you must receive Him as your Lord and Savior, if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, then you too shall be saved (Romans 10:9).

(Romans 10:9) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

30 Second Version

The above can be delivered in 3 minutes or 30 minutes, depending how the person is listening and engaging you with questions; but I have a 30 second version too, for those situations that require it. Here it is - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that

whomsoever shall believe in Him shall be saved (John 3:16). You my friend are perishing and will continue to perish because your sin separates you from the Holy God. You must repent of your sin and ask Him to save you from your sin.

(John 3:16) "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

5th – He had Boldness

(Acts 2:36 NKJV) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

5th - Boldness

Peter's message was great because it was incredibly bold. Look at verse 36:

(Acts 2:36 NKJV) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Lays it Out / No Feel Good Message - Afraid to Offend / Love & Compassion - Offended Holy God

This boldness can only come through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. So in His boldness Peter lays it out to them, **you crucified Him**. We can't leave people with some feel good gospel, afraid to offend them, for the gospel is painful – it is nails, thorns, whips, and spears. Share it in love and compassion, but don't water it down. People need to know they have offended the Holy God and are in need of a Savior. And, when you share it, share it with passion, for Jesus was passionate enough about to pour out His blood for it. Today's Christian gospel approach is to bore people into the Kingdom, as people share it with no enthusiasm or passion, the church lacks boldness and passion for this gospel. Peter's message was great because it was bold (filled with passion).

Relieve Pressure it up to You / It's their Decision / Gospel – Verb Tense

Remember too it is all God, relieve yourself of the pressure that their decision has anything to do with us. Their decision is totally up to them. Evangelism means, "gospel", "the good news". We are just telling people good news. The verb tense means, "to bring good news". It has to do with proclaiming, nowhere in the verb tense does it have anything to do with reception or results.

- Noah is called a "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5); he preached for 120 years, yet only 7 people received his message.
- Jeremiah preached for 40 years with no recorded converts.
- Then there is Jonah; he really didn't want to preach, but eventually did, and 120 thousand people repented.

The Lord will say to us, "Well done good and faithful servant.....enter into the joy of the Lord" (Matthew 25:21); the Lord DOES NOT say, "well done good and successful servant."

Every time present – God Glorified / No can Lay Charge Against Him

Every time we present the Gospel, God is glorified because we are telling of His great love, and no man after hearing the Gospel will be able to stand before Him and say you never told me, you are an unfair, evil hearted God. They will have to acknowledge in the end, God tried to reach them, but they ignored His plea.

(1 Corinthians 10:31 NKJV) Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

6th – It was Repentance Based

(Acts 2:37 NKJV) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

6th - Repentance based

Peter's message was great because it was Repentance based:

(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Great Injustice - False Converts / Watered Down / Fire Insurance / Jesus Improves Flight

I believe one of the greatest injustices we can do a person is present the gospel without the need for repentance. Too many people, especially in the pulpit, present a water-downed message because they do not tell the person they must repent, and turn from their sin. They create false converts who are merely getting themselves fire insurance, for they have no desire to turn from their sin, just to be forgiven of it. Jesus is not some pleasant additive to make their day brighter and their teeth whiter, but they must know they have offended the Holy God, and must turn from sin (God will help them if they are sincere).

Salvation Free – Discipleship Cost your Life

The person must know that salvation is free, but discipleship will cost them their life.

7th – Peter Preached for a Decision

(Acts 2:37 NKJV) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Sudden & Unexpected / Only Holy Spirit / God Teams with Us / Cut to the Heart

Pierced to the heart, and it means to "sudden and unexpected". Boom they were hit! Only through the Holy Spirit can this happen. God chooses to team with us, His Spirit moving upon them, and through us. We can see because this message was scriptural, Christ centered, bold, people were cut to the heart, and ready to respond.

(Acts 2:37 NKJV) Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

7th - Preached for a Decision / They need to Make a Decision / Ready to Pray - Sincerity

Peter's message was great because he preached for a decision. When we share the gospel, share it so that the person knows they need to make a decision, that they must make a decision yes or no for Jesus. You may tell them that tomorrow is not guaranteed. Maybe if the Lord leads you, you can even offer to pray with them at the end. Whether you are preaching from the pulpit, or going one-on-one, you can be preparing them along the way by telling them that shortly they will have the opportunity to make a commitment for Jesus Christ (whether altar call, or invitation to pray together). Let them know, God's says Today is the acceptable time; and they have to take what they have just heard and consider it seriously for their eternity is at stake; now by no means do we force a prayer for salvation and give a false sense of security, but if repentance and sincerity is displayed from their heart, we need to be ready to lead them in prayer.

(Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

(2 Corinthians 6:2 NKJV) For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Conclusion

(Acts 2:39 NKJV) "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

(Acts 2:40 NKJV) And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation."

(Acts 2:41 NKJV) Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

Peter's Message was Great / Yours will be Too

Peter's message was great because of these 7 things, and so too will be yours.

Peters Message was Great Because:

- 1st - Peter Knew his Audience
- 2nd - It was Scriptural
- 3rd - It was Christ Centered
- 4th - It had a Logical Flow
- 5th - He had Boldness
- 6th - It was Repentance Based
- 7th - Peter Preached for a Decision

Resultant 3000 Saved / How exciting for the 120 – It will be Exciting for You Too

The resultant of this Spirit Empowered message was that 3,000 were saved, and not just saved but saved from a perverse and warped world. How exciting it must have been for those 120, and how exciting it will be for you.

Evangelize - Fossilize / My Life Counted

Beloved, if we don't evangelize, we shall surely fossilize. When I die, I want to look back and say, my life counted, I made it count.

Notable Quotes

Here are some notable quotes by Christian leaders over the years that help bring me back to the necessity and urgency of sharing the gospel:

"We must be global Christians with a global vision because our God is a global God." - John Stott

"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." - Jim Elliot

"A tiny group of believers who have the gospel keep mumbling it over and over to themselves. Meanwhile, millions who have never heard it once fall into the flames of eternal hell without ever hearing the salvation story." - K.P. Yohannan

"I have but one passion - it is He, it is He alone. The world is the field and the field is the world; and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ." - Count Zinzendorf

So – Who – Where - When

So for you today, who, where, and when.

A Vision of The Lost

by William Booth

Co-Founder of the Salvation Army
(1829-1912)

On one of my recent journeys, as I gazed from the coach window, I was led into a train of thought concerning the condition of the multitudes around me. They were living carelessly in the most open and shameless rebellion against God, without a thought for their eternal welfare. As I looked out of the window, I seemed to see them all . . . millions of people all around me given up to their drink and their pleasure, their dancing and their music, their business and their anxieties, their politics and their troubles, ignorant - willfully ignorant in many cases - and in other instances knowing all about the truth and not caring at all.

But all of them, the whole mass of them, sweeping on and up in their blasphemies and devilries to the Throne of God. While my mind was thus engaged, I had a vision.

I saw a dark and stormy ocean. Over it the black clouds hung heavily; through them every now and then vivid lightning flashed and loud thunder rolled, while the winds moaned, and the waves rose and foamed, towered and broke, only to rise and foam, tower and break again.

In that ocean I thought I saw myriads of poor human beings plunging and floating, shouting and shrieking, cursing and struggling and drowning; and as they cursed and screamed they rose and shrieked again, and then some sank to rise no more.

And I saw out of this dark angry ocean, a mighty rock that rose up with its summit towering high above the black clouds that overhung the stormy sea. And all around the base of this great rock I saw a vast platform. Onto this platform, I saw with delight a number of the poor struggling, drowning wretches continually climbing out of the angry ocean. And I saw that a few of those who were already safe on the platform were helping the poor creatures still in the angry waters to reach the place of safety.

On looking more closely I found a number of those who had been rescued, industriously working and scheming by ladders, ropes, boats and other means more effective, to deliver the poor strugglers out of the sea. Here and there were some who actually jumped into the water, regardless of the consequences in their passion to "rescue the perishing." And I hardly know which gladdened me the most - the sight of the poor drowning people climbing onto the rocks reaching a place of safety, or the devotion and self-sacrifice of those whose whole being was wrapped up in the effort for their deliverance.

As I looked on, I saw that the occupants of that platform were quite a mixed company. That is, they were divided into different "sets" or classes, and they occupied themselves with different pleasures and employments. But only a very few of them seemed to make it their business to get the people out of the sea.

But what puzzled me most was the fact that though all of them had been rescued at one time or another from the ocean, nearly everyone seemed to have forgotten all about it. Anyway, it seemed the memory of its darkness and danger no longer troubled them at all. And what seemed equally strange and perplexing to me was that these people did not even seem to have any care - that is any agonizing care - about the poor perishing ones who were struggling and drowning right before their very eyes . . . many of whom were their own husbands and wives, brothers and sisters and even their own children.

Now this astonishing unconcern could not have been the result of ignorance or lack of knowledge, because they lived right there in full sight of it all and even talked about it sometimes. Many even went regularly to hear lectures and sermons in which the awful state of these poor drowning creatures was described.

I have always said that the occupants of this platform were engaged in different pursuits and pastimes. Some of them were absorbed day and night in trading and business in order to make gain, storing up their savings in boxes, safes and the like.

Many spent their time in amusing themselves with growing flowers on the side of the rock, others in painting pieces of cloth or in playing music, or in dressing themselves up in different styles and walking about to be admired. Some occupied themselves chiefly in eating and drinking; others were taken up with arguing about the poor drowning creatures that had already been rescued.

But the thing to me that seemed the most amazing was that those on the platform to whom He called, who heard His voice and felt that they ought to obey it - at least they said they did - those who confessed to love Him much were in full sympathy with Him in the task He had undertaken - who worshipped Him or who professed to do so - were so taken up with their trades and professions, their money saving and pleasures, their families and circles, their religions and arguments about it, and their preparation for going to the mainland, that they did not listen to the cry that came to them from this Wonderful Being who had Himself gone down into the sea. Anyway, if they heard it they did not heed it. They did not care. And so the multitude went on right before them struggling and shrieking and drowning in the darkness.

And then I saw something that seemed to me even more strange than anything that had gone on before in this strange vision. I saw that some of these people on the platform to whom this Wonderful Being had called, wanting them to come and help Him in His difficult task of saving these perishing creatures, were always praying and crying out to Him to come to them!

Some wanted Him to come and stay with them, and spend His time and strength in making them happier. Others wanted Him to come and take away various doubts and misgivings they had concerning the truth of some letters He had written them. Some wanted Him to come and make them feel more secure on the rock - so secure that they would be quite sure that they should never slip off again into the ocean. Numbers of others wanted Him to make them feel quite certain that they would really get off the rock and onto the mainland someday; because as a matter of fact, it was well known that some had walked so carelessly as to lose their footing, and had fallen back again into the stormy waters.

So these people used to meet and get up as high on the rock as they could, and looking towards the mainland (where they thought the Great Being was) they would cry out, "Come to us! Come and help us!" And all the while He was down (by His Spirit) among the poor struggling, drowning creatures in the angry deep, with His arms around them trying to drag them out, and looking up - oh! so longingly but all in vain - to those on the rock, crying to them with His voice all hoarse from calling, "Come to Me! Come, and help Me!

And then I understood it all. It was plain enough. The sea was the ocean of life - the sea of real, actual human existence. That lightning was the gleaming of piercing truth coming from Jehovah's Throne. That thunder was the distant echoing of the wrath of God. Those multitudes of people shrieking, struggling and agonizing in the stormy sea, was the thousands and thousands of poor harlots and harlot-makers, of drunkards and drunkard makers, of thieves, liars, blasphemers and ungodly people of every kindred, tongue and nation.

Oh what a black sea it was! And oh, what multitudes of rich and poor, ignorant and educated were there. They were all so unlike in their outward circumstances and conditions, yet all alike in one thing - all sinners before God - all held by, and holding onto, some iniquity, fascinated by some idol, the slaves of some devilish lust, and ruled by the foul fiend from the bottomless pit!

"All alike in one thing?" No, all alike in two things - not only the same in their wickedness but, unless rescued, the same in their sinking, sinking . . . down, down, down . . . to the same terrible doom. That great sheltering rock represented Calvary, the place where Jesus had died for them. And the people on it were those who had been rescued. The way they used their energies, gifts and time represented the occupations and amusements of those who professed to be saved from sin and hell - followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. The handful of fierce, determined ones, who were risking their own lives in saving the perishing were true soldiers of the cross of Jesus. That Mighty Being who was calling to them from the midst of the angry waters was the Son of God, "the same yesterday, today and forever" who is still struggling and interceding to save the dying multitudes about us from this terrible doom of damnation, and whose voice can be heard above the music, machinery, and noise of life, calling on the rescued to come and help Him save the world.

My friends in Christ, you are rescued from the waters, you are on the rock. He is in the dark sea calling on you to come to Him and help Him. Will you go? Look for yourselves. The surging sea of life, crowded with perishing multitudes rolls up to the very spot on which you stand. Leaving the vision, I now come to speak of the fact - a fact that is as real as the Bible, as real as the Christ who hung upon the cross, as real as the judgment day will be, and as real as the heaven and hell that will follow it.

Look! Don't be deceived by appearances - men and things are not what they seem. All who are not on the rock are in the sea! Look at them from the standpoint of the great White Throne, and what a sight you have! Jesus Christ, the Son of God is, through His Spirit, in the midst of this dying multitude, struggling to save them. And He is calling on you to jump into the sea - to go right away to His side and help Him in the holy strife. Will you jump? That is, will you go to His feet and place yourself absolutely at His disposal?

A young Christian once came to me, and told me that for some time she had been giving the Lord her profession and prayers and money, but now she wanted to give Him her life. She wanted to go right into the fight. In other words, she wanted to go to His assistance in the sea. As when a man from the shore, seeing another struggling in the water, takes off those outer garments that would hinder his efforts and leaps to the rescue, so will you who still linger on the bank, thinking and singing and praying about the poor perishing souls, lay aside your shame, your pride, your cares about other people's opinions, your love of ease and all the selfish loves that have kept you back for so long, and rush to the rescue of this multitude of dying men and women.

Does the surging sea look dark and dangerous? Unquestionably it is so. There is no doubt that the leap for you, as for everyone who takes it, means difficulty and scorn and suffering. For you it may mean more than this. It may mean death. He who beckons you from the sea however, knows what it will mean - and knowing, He still calls to you and bids to you to come.

You must do it! You cannot hold back. You have enjoyed yourself in Christianity long enough. You have had pleasant feelings, pleasant songs, pleasant meetings, pleasant prospects. There has been much of human happiness, much clapping of hands and shouting of praises - very much of heaven on earth.

Now then, go to God and tell Him you are prepared as much as necessary to turn your back upon it all, and that you are willing to spend the rest of your days struggling in the midst of these perishing multitudes, whatever it may cost you.

You must do it. With the light that is now broken in upon your mind and the call that is now sounding in your ears, and the beckoning hands that are now before your eyes, you have no alternative. To go down among the perishing crowds is your duty. Your happiness from now on will consist in sharing their misery, your ease in sharing their pain, your crown in helping them to bear their cross, and your heaven in going into the very jaws of hell to rescue them.

William Booth was the founder of The Salvation Army, a Christian ministry to the poor now operating in 113 countries around the world.

Chapter 3

Arise and Walk (Picture Perfect) – 3:1-16

Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

8 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)
- They found Power in Evangelism (2:1-41)

Disciples have received Power – We can Too / Now Next Part – Witnesses in Jerusalem

The disciples have received power from on high, and we have spent considerable time studying how they received power, and how we too can receive the very same power for our lives today as we looked at the 8 keys to the early disciples power. Now we are moving into our next section of this wonderful book, as we will see the disciples ministering, witnessing in their hometown of Jerusalem. After Jerusalem we will see the witness expand out to Judea, Samaria, and then the outer parts of the world.

Last Study – Moved in the Multitude / This Study Reach Down to the Individual

Last week we saw God move mightily in the multitudes (there at Pentecost), and here today we see God move individually as He reaches down and lifts the lame beggar out from his circumstances. May we know today, God is as concerned with the hurting individual as He is in gathering a mighty harvest of the multitude. Let's read verses 1-13.

(Acts 3:1 NKJV) Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

(Acts 3:2 NKJV) And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

(Acts 3:3 NKJV) who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

(Acts 3:4 NKJV) And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

(Acts 3:5 NKJV) So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

(Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

(Acts 3:7 NKJV) And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

(Acts 3:8 NKJV) So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God.

(Acts 3:9 NKJV) And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

(Acts 3:10 NKJV) Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

(Acts 3:11 NKJV) Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

(Acts 3:12 NKJV) So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

(Acts 3:13 NKJV) "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

(Acts 3:14 NKJV) "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

(Acts 3:15 NKJV) "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

(Acts 3:16 NKJV) "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Picture of Us – Principles for Us

This story is a beautiful picture of us, and also gives principles for us (as we see them in Peter and John) and can seek and apply these same principles to our own lives.

Arise and Walk (Picture Perfect) – 3:1-13

- Picture of Us
- Principles for Us

Picture of Us

Picture of Us / Imagine his Life – 40 years / Mother's Womb 9 Months – Joy & Anxiety

The story of this man is a picture of every one of us we will see as we take a closer look at his life. Imagine his life; verse 3:2 tells us that this man had been lame since birth, and verse 4:22 says the man is now over 40 years old. Now 40 years is a long time, a very long time, and for forty years this man was not able to walk on his own, lame since birth (3:2). Imagine nine months in the womb, nine months of dreams and waiting for the gift from God for his mother and father. Imagine the mother and father, imagine the day she realizes she is pregnant and breaks the news to dad. Was he a first time dad, or child number four was on the way, regardless the hearts would be filled with joy and anxiety as every parent is today. Painting the room, buying toys, gifts from friends and family, oh the joy; another child, a gift from the Lord, oh we bless you Lord; but Father we do pray that you would form and fashion every joint and bone, cell and tissue, that you would guard this child from the ills of this fallen world. Nine months of waiting for the little package sent from heaven

(Acts 4:22 NKJV) For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Birthing Day – Push, Push, Breath / Beautiful Boy - But Wait / How make it Cruel World

Birthing day would come, and the childbearing would began, a push and a deep breath, a push and a deep breath, and then the head would appear, then the shoulders breach through, and now get ready, push, push, and push, and it is a boy. It is a beautiful baby boy! It's a boy, a beautiful baby boy, but wait, something doesn't look right, his feet and ankles don't seem to be right.

Father please, not my boy, not my son, not my child, please Jehovah, please! The heartbreak of any parent, my child is not whole, my poor baby. Lord how will my child make it through such a cruel world lame, kids can be so cruel and then adulthood, Lord how will we provide for him mom

and dad may have worried, what happens when we are gone, who will take care of our baby, will he ever find love, will he be alone when we are gone?

Heartache of Parents as Grow / Doctor after Doctor / Kisses and Tears / Begins to Crawl

The heartache of the parents as he grows, and things don't get better; doctor after doctor saying sorry there is nothing that can be done. The little baby won't know, all he knows are the kisses of his parents upon his lips, their loving eyes continually staring at him, but so often start to well-up with tears – I wonder why that happens little baby thinks to himself. At age one he begins to crawl, and he will never advance beyond that. It appears from our text that it was his feet and ankles, so he would have the ability to crawl, but who could ever crawl far in those conditions. As his friends and siblings would toddle, then walk, then run, he would never go beyond the crawl. As they would laugh and giggle playing catch and hid-and-go-seek, his participation would always be limited from playing and enjoying as the other kids would.

Burden upon Parents / Mom work at Home – Dad at the Mill / No Father Son Walks

Imagine the burden upon the parents? Mom working around the home, and the baby wanting to come along – mommy carry me (on top of all the manual work you have to do here in the home). Daddy comes home from the field, or the quarry, or carpenter shop, and the little one is excited, daddy play with me, be with me, carry me outside, put me on your shoulders (after the exhausting day in the fields). Dad and son would never get to go for a walk, just talk and enjoy the simple things of life. To just get a treat together at the market, one of those honeycomb wafers, would mean daddy carrying him on his shoulders (after working all day); or dad saying you wait here son and I'll go get us some (ok daddy – hurry back).

Parents can anything Tear at our Hearts More / Christ Knows / Jesus Regular / Christ Sees

Parent, can anything tear at our heart more than our child lacking or hurting. Parent, Christ knows your pain; you want the best for your child, but your child is living in a lame (limited condition), maybe it is an illness, maybe it is financial circumstances within your life, maybe a personal sin in their life has made them lame, know that Christ knows. And maybe you think Christ doesn't know, maybe you think Christ is walking by them, JUST as these parents might have thought. You see this Beautiful Gate of the Temple, it is the way that Jesus would have went to the Temple many a times (this gate opened into the Court of the Women from the outer Court of the Gentiles. It served, in a sense, as the front door to the temple proper.). This boy now a man was laid there day after day, month after month, year after year, for the Temple was a great place to beg, for how many would have gave even just for the show it. Day after day, month after month, year after year, includes all those days, months, and years that Jesus would have went to the Temple and walked right by him. How his parents may have said, how he may have said as he saw Jesus walk by, what about me, I hear of you blessings in others lives, I'm seeing others get healed, but Jesus you keep walking by, you seem to be blessing everyone else, but me, what about this love you proclaim. It may seem that Jesus kept walking by, never noticing him, BUT – Jesus saw, for Jesus sees, He saw him, just as He see you now. This same Jesus who would walk by him, knew his name, this same Jesus that walked by him caught his tears in a bottle, knew the number of hairs on his head, and this same Jesus that walked by him, had thoughts of peace and not of bad, had a future and a hope for this man, and his day would come (and we read it here).

(Jeremiah 29:11) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

(Psalm 56:8) You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?

(Matthew 10:30) "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

God has Divine Appointment for Every Man / None Perish – Door – Grains of Sand

God has no less than one divine appointment for every man and woman on this earth (for He wishes that none should perish – and He stands at the door and knocks), He has at least one, but if you consider Psalms 139 and that His thoughts towards us would outnumber the grains of sand on the shore, then I would say God has an uncountable number of divine appointments

determined for every man, woman, and child.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)⁹*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

Revelation 3:20 (NKJV)²⁰*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

Psalms 139:17-18 (NKJV)¹⁷ *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!*

How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸ *If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.*

This man's Appointment – Today / Meet the Goldsmith

This man's divine appointment was today, as Peter and John will give him more than silver and gold, but give him the Goldsmith Himself, Jesus Christ.

See Picture of Us / Lame from Birth – Adam and Eve / not Walk with God / Divine

And here we can see the lame man is a picture of us. You see, like the crippled man, we too were lame from birth. Adam, our father in the flesh, fell. And so great was his fall that all of his descendants were born lame. Unable to walk with God, or after the things of God, we sat outside the temple—alienated from God because of our sin—and begged enough silver or gold to get us by for one more day. Maybe we were bitter about life, maybe we weren't, but every one of us realized our handicap to some extent. And then something happened, we had our divine appointment. Through a brother or sister, a church or a fellowship, perhaps when we least expected it, Jesus grabbed us by the hand and said, "Stand up and walk. I'm calling you into the kingdom. I'm taking you to heaven." Thus, it is no wonder that like the crippled man, we not only walk, but we leap and praise God for His goodness and grace to us who were once lame who can now walk.

Psalms 126:3 (NKJV)³ *The LORD has done great things for us, And we are glad.*

Back to You Parents – Does Jesus See? / Whole in Heaven – No Sorrow – Well Done

Back to you parents, those of you who may be heartbroken over your child's current condition, and you wonder if Jesus sees – He does. May you see that your child will be made whole in heaven if he or she is hurting here on earth, for there will be no more sorrow, nor pain, and your child will walk, leap, and praise the Lord of heaven once the Lord says, well done thy good and faithful servant, you endured the ills of the fallen world, and like the lame beggar I took the ills of the fallen world and I used you to show people my glory – so that they may come to My glory.

Revelation 21:4 (NKJV)⁴*And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

Acts 3:8 (NKJV)⁸*So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.*

What if suffering because Personal Choices / Their Faith – Choice / Leave Nothing Undone

What about their spiritual state you may wonder, that the ills they suffer (addictions, continual failures) are because of their personal choice; just as Peter said it was here (that it was this man's faith that made him well), maybe you say my heart breaks thinking that my child will not believe. To that I say to every parents, leave nothing undone in what you can do. This story not only gives us perfect picture of us, and maybe our children, it also gives us a perfect principles to apply to our lives personally as we look at the life of Peter and John.

(Acts 3:16 NKJV) "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Principles for Us

Parents apply these principles in your lives personally and you will have left nothing undone in your child rearing; and..... for every individual here, apply these principles in your lives personally and you will leave nothing undone in your personal spiritual growth.

Principles for Us:

- 1.) Peter and John were men of Consistency
- 2.) Peter and John were men of Sensitivity
- 3.) Peter and John were men of Flexibility
- 4.) Peter and John were men of Confidence
- 5.) Peter and John were men of Humility

Peter and John Heal a Lame Man

(Acts 3:1 NKJV) Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

1.) Peter and John were men of Consistency

Prayer 3x Daily (9, 12, 3) / Stopped what Doing / 3hrs / 15 Silent – 30 Petition – 15 Adore

Peter and John were men of consistency. Like all devout Jews, according to the Jewish custom of the day, every day at 9:00 A.M., noon, and 3:00 P.M., they stopped what they were doing and headed to the temple, where they spent an hour in prayer. Let it be noted that that would equal 3 hours of prayer each day. This time consisted of fifteen minutes of silent meditation, thirty minutes of petition, and fifteen minutes of adoration—which, by the way, I think is a neat pattern for prayer. Meditate on the greatness and goodness of God, and you will be confident in bringing your requests to Him. When you realize that even your biggest concerns are no problem for Him, your heart will overflow in worship toward Him.

Do you have an Hour of Prayer / Key of Power / Consistent over Flash / Make Plan – Flash

Christian, do you have an hour of prayer, a set time of prayer that you attend daily, I think it has clearly been developed in our studies of chapter 1 and 2 that prayer is a key to power. Peter and John were men of consistency, and I will take consistency over flash-in-the-pan, one-hit wonders, any ole day. Make a prayer plan that is achievable, one that you can remain consistent in everyday, and you will have the joy of a wonderful prayer life. The ole, I'm going to wake up at 4am and prayer until 5, then read until 6, all sound great and you may be able to do it for a few days, but life will catch-up at some point, and you'll sleep-in until 7 and feel like a total failure. Make a plan that is achievable, and then stay consistent in it.

Total Blessing – Prayer Partner

I'll tell you one of the blessings these two had in their consistency was that they had each other. They had each other to keep them strong, consistent, so that when one didn't feel like praying, very well the other one could have said let's go, and been enough to get the other one up and going. Prayer partners are great, and if you can find one, keep them. A prayer partner doesn't necessarily mean a certain individual, for it can also mean a consistent prayer meeting (like the weekly woman's prayer, or weekly prayer meeting at the church, etc).

(Acts 3:2 NKJV) And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple;

(Acts 3:3 NKJV) who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

(Acts 3:4 NKJV) And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."

2.) Peter and John were men of Sensitivity

Passed 100's time – This Time Unique / Be Sensitive to the Moment / Consistent Prayer

Secondly, Peter and John were men of sensitivity. As the lame man called out to them, they found their eyes "fastened" on him. We've passed this guy hundreds of times before, they must have thought, but at this moment something unique is happening. We need to have sensitivity to the moments that are put before us, so that we don't miss the moment presented to us. Be

consistent in your prayer life, and you will find yourself being sensitive to the move of the Spirit around you during the day, opening up opportunities.

Not just Witnessing / Counseling – Hello – Coffee / Seize the Moment

I don't just mean witnessing, but also to be open to that brother who is hurting, that sister who is lonely, that person behind the counter that just needs to hear someone say, how are you? Be sensitive to the opportunities God puts before you, and when presented, seize them!

4 People on Train (Young Lady – Grandmother - General - Lieutenant)

I am reminded of the story of the 4 people on the train. In the tiny compartment of a passenger train sat a young lieutenant in uniform. Next to him sat his commanding officer, a crusty old general. Across from him sat a beautiful young lady. Next to her was her grandmother. As the hours passed, an attraction developed between the young lieutenant and the young lady. They were laughing and talking and enjoying the trip when suddenly the train went through a long dark tunnel. Midway through the darkness, the sound of a kiss was followed by the smack of a slap. As the train emerged from the tunnel, the four travelers looked at one another with a variety of expressions. The young lady was delighted that the lieutenant would kiss her at that moment, but puzzled as to why her grandmother would slap him. The grandmother was angry that the lieutenant had the audacity to kiss her granddaughter, but grateful to the general who slapped the young man in for getting out-of-line. The general was proud of his lieutenant for kissing the young lady, but confused and smarting from the slap of the young girl thinking it was him. The lieutenant was hardly able to contain the laughter within him, as he alone knew what had actually transpired in the tunnel. Under the cover of darkness, he had seized the moment to kiss the girl and smack the general.

Seize the Moment

Seize the moment, folks! Watch for the moment of the miraculous when the Lord will use you in this dark tunnel of time to slap the Enemy in the face, as you heal a hurting world.

3.) Peter and John were men of Flexibility

Don't have Time – Got Meeting / Interruption – can be Divine Appt / Expect to be Bothered

Peter and John were men of flexibility. When they saw this man, they could have said, "We don't have time for him. We have to start the temple prayer meeting in just a few minutes." But they realized what we all must learn: Interruption is often divine inspiration. For some of us, life is one bother after another. I have found that when I start a day, saying, "Nobody better bother me," I find myself getting bothered at every turn. But if I expect to be bothered and remain flexible, I allow the Lord room to work in moments of the miraculous.

God has Itinerary for us – May conflict with Out to-do List

How often interruptions are divine appointments; may we allow ourselves to see that God has an itinerary for us every day, which may be contrary to the 20 things that we have on our list of things-to-do.

(Acts 3:5 NKJV) So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. (Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

4.) Peter and John were men of Confidence

Confident in God's Power – His Spirit upon Them

Peter and John were men of confidence. Having the power of the Spirit upon their lives, they were given the green light by the Spirit to proceed in the arena of the miraculous.

Been here Before & Failed – Epileptic / Release of the Spirit / Prayer & Fasting

I point to you also, Peter and John have been here before, they were faced with a like situation, but had completely different results, but this time was different. The last time, they couldn't heal the epileptic, this time they heal the lame. The difference, the Holy Spirit is upon them, and two, they are men of prayer which is the avenue to releasing the Holy Spirit in a person's life. Jesus had said because of your faith (if you had the faith of the mustard seed you could have healed him), but that kind of faith only comes through much prayer and fasting, and our first point saw that they had become men of consistency in prayer, and now when the time comes they are ready. Beloved, prayer and fasting will make us people of confidence, for we will be tapped into the power source, and be sensitive to the move of the Spirit.

Matthew 17:14-21 (NKJV) ¹⁴And when they had come to the multitude, a man came to Him, kneeling down to Him and saying, ¹⁵"Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic and suffers severely; for he often falls into the fire and often into the water. ¹⁶So I brought him to Your disciples, but they could not cure him."

¹⁷Then Jesus answered and said, **"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me."** ¹⁸And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour.

¹⁹Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?"

²⁰So Jesus said to them, **"Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. ²¹However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting."**

Thomas Aquinas w/ the Pope

Verse 6 - Silver and gold have I none - I am reminded of the story of one of the first popes, and on a particular day he was counting all the silver and gold coins that the church had brought in, and in walked Thomas Aquinas and the pope said well Thomas I guess the church can no longer say silver and gold have I not (with laugh and a smile); Thomas Aquinas answers, true, and neither can the church no longer say, in the Name of Jesus Christ, arise and walk.

Throughout History – People trade Purity for Prosperity / May we live again in Confidence

Throughout history, whenever the church has traded purity for prosperity, she has lost power. May we be a people that live-again in the confidence that God's Holy Spirit is upon us, and we can once again say, In the Name of Jesus, arise and walk, that we have the words of life. Maybe today you need to apply those very words to your own personal life, for you have forgotten the power of God in your life, have lost the joy of your salvation, may you hear the words of the living God – arise and walk.

(Acts 3:7 NKJV) And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

(Acts 3:8 NKJV) So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God.

Doctor Luke – Medical Terms / Ligaments & Tendons popping back in Place

Dr Luke is giving the details of a miracle, as he is amazed and blown-away. Dr Luke is giving medical terminology of ligaments and tendons, ankle sockets, all pop into place. The original Greek text seems to indicate that this man's ankles were congenitally and permanently dislocated. Then in a moment, they all snapped-crackled-and popped back into place.

Right Hand – Psalms 16:11

Verse 7 - And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up - I think it interesting that Luke points out that it was the right hand extended. Rather than say Peter extended his hand, he uses precious space in the letter to say, the right hand. I love it of course because this man is the perfect picture of Psalms 16:11, that at God's right hand are pleasures forevermore, and this man is leaping and jumping, and praising the Lord, and the pleasures forevermore are pouring forth from him.

Psa 16:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

(Acts 3:9 NKJV) And all the people saw him walking and praising God.

(Acts 3:10 NKJV) Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

(Acts 3:11 NKJV) Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

(Acts 3:12 NKJV) So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

(Acts 3:13 NKJV) "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

They Knew Him / Power of Changed Life / People Running because of Commotion

Verse 10 - Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple - They knew him – what power there is as other people who knew us before, see us now. A changed life is a powerful testimony, for no one can deny it. People are running from all over the Temple area to come see what has just happened. I tend to think the reason is because they can see there is some kind of commotion going on, daily religion isn't happening, where people come somberly and reverently, but there is a commotion going and it stands out like bright yellow on a black canvas; the bright yellow is this man jumping, shouting, and praising the Lord. The religious people are probably saying hey settle down, chill-out, have some respect this is the Temple, but this man isn't bound by religion, he is now abounding in the joy of the Lord, he is experiencing that at His right hand are pleasures ever more.

Psa 16:11 (NKJV)¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Get Excited – People will come See / Nutcase? – Was this man a Nutcase

Get excited about Jesus, worship and praise Him, and people will take note. Am I saying be a nut case, no, do you think this man was being a nutcase, no – this man is simply celebrating what God has done in his life.

Psalms 126:3 (NKJV)³ The LORD has done great things for us, And we are glad.

5.) Peter and John were men of Humility

Potential Peril for Peter / Look at my Power

Peter and John were men of humility. I believe the moment of greatest potential peril for Peter was when he took the lame man by the hand and lifted him to his feet. How easy it would have been for Peter to say, "Hey, look what just happened! I had this surge of faith and power and I grabbed this man, and he's now walking and leaping. This calls for the birth of a new ministry: THE APOSTLE PETER HEALING MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL. I hope we got a picture of this. I can put it on my prayer calendar. I can take this guy on tour!" In the next verse, however, we see Peter do exactly the opposite.

Could have been Shelved / What did Peter Do – Point back to God of Miracles

At this very crucial moment when Peter could have been shelved from ministry, what did he do? He said, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? You know your history, how God parted the Red Sea, provided manna from heaven, used a slingshot to kill a giant. Our God is the God of the miraculous. Why, then, are you surprised that He healed a lame man?"

Be Careful when God Uses You / We like to think we are Spiritual

Whenever God uses people in any way, there will be those who will look to them and say, "You're special. You're anointed. My goodness, you're spiritual." Watch out! Be careful. It is the base part of our nature that wants people to assume we're deeper than we really are, think we're special, and know our name. .

Will not Share Glory / Ish 42

God says He will not share His glory with anyone:

*Isaiah 42:8 (NKJV)*⁸ *I am the LORD, that is My name;
And My glory I will not give to another,
Nor My praise to carved images.*

Quickest way out of Ministry

If you're a musician or a Sunday-school teacher, a writer or a singer, a pastor or a worship leader, know this: The quickest way to be taken out of ministry is to say, "I want my name exalted." I know a number of men and women who were at one time greatly used by the Lord but are now on the shelf gathering dust because they wanted the glory—or even just a portion of it.

Peter wisely took Spotlight off Self – Placed it unto Jesus / Phil 2:10

Peter wisely and immediately took the spotlight off himself and pointed it at Jesus, for it is at His Name that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess (Philippians 2:10).

But – Don't have False Humility Either / John the Greatest – Least Kingdom Greater

But don't have false humility, and let that rob you from being used by God, for the fact is we do have power, and we do great things for Jesus. Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet ever (that would mean greater than Moses, Daniel, Jeremiah, Elijah, Isaiah), yet he that is least in the kingdom is greater than John. That would mean you and I, for we are in the kingdom. Read the account of John the Baptist, and we read of no miracles, no rising of the dead, no healing of the lame, did no signs, no mighty signs did he do. We have the clarity of who Jesus is, and what He has done, and what He can do. John would ask from prison, are you the one or do we look for another; John had his doubts, but we live in the clarity like John wasn't privilege too, as we clearly see and know who Jesus is. We, like John, can point and say "Behold the Lamb", with for assurance and clarity, and that is powerful.

*Matthew 11:11 (NKJV)*¹¹ *Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*

*John 1:29 (NKJV)*²⁹ *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John raised finger and Pointed / That made him Great – We can be Great

But what He could do, that made him the greatest was that he could raise his finger and point, and say behold the Lamb of God. John could do what no other prophet ever could, and that made him the greatest.

Arise and Walk (Picture Perfect) – 3:1-13

- Picture of Us
- Principles for Us

Principles for Us:

- 1.) Peter and John were men of Consistency
- 2.) Peter and John were men of Sensitivity
- 3.) Peter and John were men of Flexibility
- 4.) Peter and John were men of Confidence
- 5.) Peter and John were men of Humility

Times of Refreshing – 3:11-26

Amazing things happen When we Do

Amazing things happen when people pray, when people wait upon the Lord. We see it in our study today and in the past weeks.

Disciples have Received Power – 3K Saved / Now Famous Words – Arise / 2nd Sermon

Well the disciples received power just as Jesus had promised. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, preached his first sermon on the Day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people get saved. Shortly thereafter (whether that be a day or weeks we do not know) Peter and John are on their way to the Temple to pray, see a lame beggar, and say those now famous words, “silver and gold have I none, but in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk”. And so this man did, and now a commotion has started at the Temple, and we pick it up there today as Peter will give his second sermon and 5,000 will be saved.

(Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

8 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)
- They found Power in Evangelism (2:1-41)

Title – Times of Refreshing / Peter’s Message – Very Jewish / Key Words Unlock Flood

The title of this message is “Times of Refreshing”, based on the heart of Peter’s message (verse 19); Peter will preach a very Jewish sermon (and why not he is at the Temple) and he will preach one of the greatest, if not the greatest, message on freedom and forgiveness. And the key to seeing how great it is, is by unlocking the “key” words he uses, that all tie back to the Old Testament, which then unlocks the flood gates of God’s grace and love for those present, and for us today.

(Acts 3:19 NKJV) "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Outline

The key words will serve as our outline of our text today.

Outline: Times of Refreshing – Opening the Floodgates (3:11-26):

- Men of Israel – 3:12
- His Servant – 3:13
- Prince of Life – 3:15
- Times of Refreshing – 3:19

- Times of Restoration – 3:21

Men of Israel – 3:12

1st Word – Men of Israel / Floodgates Opened

The first word that unlocks the floodgates of His grace and love are the words, “Men of Israel”.

Peter and John Preach in Solomon’s Porch

(Acts 3:11 NKJV) Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed.

(Acts 3:12 NKJV) So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

Thousands Come / 5K Saved

There are thousands coming, for we are going to see 5,000 saved when Peter’s message is finished.

Acts 4:4 (NKJV) ⁴However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

2 Questions / 1st – Why Marvel / 60 Years Survival / God keeps His Promises

Peter asks two questions, and the first one is why are you marveling? You are the people of Israel (Men of Israel), you are the people that’s God parted the Red Sea, who stilled the Jordan River, that tumbled the walls of Jericho, who stilled the sun from moving until Israel defeated her enemy, who used a little shepherd boy to slay the giant, who rained fire down from heaven as Elijah called for it, are you not the nation who God has done all these things? Why do you marvel at this, you are the people of Israel, your God is the Lord, He is the one who has sustained all 5 million of you surrounded by 300 million Muslims set on destroying you, yet this week you celebrate 60 years of being a State (14 May 2008). You people of Israel should not be surprised when you see God work, and you should know that His miracles attest to His presence, and that signs follow His Word. God has done great miracles for Israel, and continues to do great miracles for them. Christian, so too has He for you, and will continue to do; the existence of Israel is a picture to us that God keeps His promises, and if you ever doubt He keeps His promises, look at Israel, and be reminded He will keep every promise He has ever written or spoken about you, especially that he will be faithful to complete what He has begun in us:

Mark 16:20 (NKJV) ²⁰And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen.

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

2nd – Why Looking at Us

The second question, why are you looking at us like we had something to do with it; Peter knows he is not a swimming pool filled with the Holy Spirit, but a conduit that the Holy Spirit can move through. Peter doesn’t touch the glory, but points to the glory. Peter says why are you looking at me like I have some power to make these things happen. Good example for us when God uses us.

His Servant – 3:13

2nd Word – His Servant / Floodgates Opened

The second word that unlocks the floodgates of His grace and love are the words, “His Servant”.

(Acts 3:13 NKJV) “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.

His Servant – Referencing back to Isaiah 53 / The Substitution – Bore it All

Verse 13 – *His Servant Jesus* – Peter is referencing back to the suffering servant of God spoken of in Isaiah 53. Peter is talking to a Jewish crowd (referencing the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), he knows his audience, and he is pointing them back to the Scriptures to bring them to light and life for them (just as he did in his first sermon in chapter 2). Isaiah 53, will declare those beautiful prophetic picture and words of the Messiah taking God's wrath against sin, as the Messiah would be the substitution atonement for man's sin. Peter is tying the Scriptures together for them, to show them the Christ.

Let's Read Isaiah 53 – as a Devotion / the Depth of His Love – Willing so we are His

Let's read Isaiah 53 together, not to study it, but let's read it together devotionally and let the Lord speak His depth of love to us, as we remember what the Lamb was willing to take and do for our love, to call us His own, so that He may say "MINE".

Isaiah 53:1-12 (NKJV) ¹ *Who has believed our report?*

And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.*

He has no form or comeliness;

And when we see Him,

There is no beauty that we should desire Him.

³ *He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.*

And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;

He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

⁴ *Surely He has borne our griefs*

And carried our sorrows;

Yet we esteemed Him stricken,

Smitten by God, and afflicted.

⁵ *But He was wounded for our transgressions,*

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;*

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ *He was oppressed and He was afflicted,*

Yet He opened not His mouth;

He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,

And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,

So He opened not His mouth.

⁸ *He was taken from prison and from judgment,*

And who will declare His generation?

For He was cut off from the land of the living;

For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.

⁹ *And they made His grave with the wicked—*

But with the rich at His death,

Because He had done no violence,

Nor was any deceit in His mouth.

¹⁰ *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;*

He has put Him to grief.

When You make His soul an offering for sin,

He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,

And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

¹¹ *He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.*

*By His knowledge **My righteous Servant** shall justify many,*

For He shall bear their iniquities.

¹² *Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,*

And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,

Because He poured out His soul unto death,

And He was numbered with the transgressors,

And He bore the sin of many,

And made intercession for the transgressors.

Praise & Prayer

Oh Heavenly Father we praise you for your great love and mercy for us, and we feel and sense the floodgates of your love pouring out upon us today as we read and reflect what you would take and do to be our love and us yours.

Peter opens Floodgate of Isaiah 53 / 5K Respond with their Hearts / Picture Perfect Christ

Peter is opening the floodgates of Isaiah 53 unto these people, and 5000 will respond with their hearts, for no one whose heart is open can resist the flood of God's love as it is poured out from Isaiah. Isaiah 53 is the picture perfect of the Messiah, and 5000 see it clearly and respond.

The Prince of Life – 3:15

3rd Word – Prince of Life / Floodgates Opened

The third word that unlocks the floodgates of His grace and love are the words, "Prince of Life".

(Acts 3:14 NKJV) "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

(Acts 3:15 NKJV) "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.

(Acts 3:16 NKJV) "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

Prince – means Author / Only Creator had Power to Come and Rise / Logic / Power

Prince means author, creator, captain, and/or leader. Peter is saying, you killed the Author of life, you killed the Creator of life. These Jews did not question or debate evolution versus divine creation, they knew God created life, they were taught it since they were a babe in their mother's womb. Peter is saying only the One who had the same power to create the universe, to create you and me, has the same power to come and be the Messiah, and to have the power to raise from the dead. Once again Peter preaches the resurrection (just as in the first sermon) for the resurrection is the power of the gospel. Peter is piercing their heart with logic right here, and it is such a shame today that all the "smart" people can buy into evolution which crumbles fast under the weight of close examination.

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) *¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

By Faith in His Name – "Onoma" / Creator – Savior – Redeemer – Lover – Friend / Ish 53

Verse 16 – Peter says by faith in His Name - The word used here for name is "onoma" which is the word used to capture a person's whole being, not just their identification name. The "onoma", all that He is, the Creator of the world, the Savior of the world, our Strong tower, the Healer of our soul and body, our redeemer, our Lover, our Best Friend. He is our Isaiah 53!

Remarkable – Beyond Comprehension

How remarkable, beyond comprehension, that Jesus the Prince of life, the Author of life, was murdered, but still held the world together, even in death. Jesus holds all things together, and if He should let them go, the world will dissolve (2 Peter 3:10); so when they punched Him, it was He who held the knuckles together that pounded Him. The whip that shredded His back, every lash Jesus was holding the whip together. As the nails pierced His hand, He held them together, for He holds all things together. What a great mystery to me, what utter amazement to me, that Jesus was able to hold all things together, the whole universe, even while He was being beaten and pounded by the world, the very world that He was holding together. Hey Christian, if Jesus could hold the world together while He was being crucified, He can hold your world together regardless of what you may be facing.

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) *¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Colossians 1:15-17 (NKJV) *¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. ¹⁷And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.*

2 Peter 3:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

Note on Faith

Verse 16 - "The faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness." Not only did the healing itself come from God, but even the faith to believe came from Him, for Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith—which is why I thoroughly reject the implication that people are sick because they don't have enough faith to be made well. I would say to the preachers and faith healers who propound such an idea, "Why isn't your faith kicking in?" People debate was it Peter and John's faith, or was it this lame man's faith, was it both, to that question I answer I don't know. It clearly appears that Peter and John are exercising faith, but you would think this man had to believe too, but to that end it doesn't matter to me, for the faith is from God, and it is by faith this man was healed, and for us today – God has given you a measure of faith, and apply all that He has given, and God will do great things in your life.

Romans 12:3 (NKJV) ³*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.*

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV) ²*looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Yet – But / Thank God for these 3 Letters

So Peter says you killed the Author of Life, the very one that holds the world together, who holds your very life together, you killed Him – but, and thank God for these 3 letters in the Bible, "YET".

(Acts 3:17 NKJV) "Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

Peter's Tact – Ignorance / Door Open for Repentance / Win Argument – Lose Soul

I like Peter's tact here. He said, "What you did, you did through ignorance." He left the door open for his audience to repent. Sometimes I think we press our point so hard that we win the argument, but lose the soul.

Peter can Preach about in Sensitivity about Denying / Remember You've been There

Peter can preach in sensitivity about denying the Lord, for he speaks firsthand. Just remember that when you counsel or share, remember how broken you were after you blew-it, and the grace and mercy you desired to be shown; remember how you felt then, and consider how much the person you are talking to at that moment is desiring the same thing. Lots of people lower the boom of the critical spirit upon a person who has failed, even though they had done the exact same things years ago. Just remember, they are – where you were, and now give them grace and compassion as Peter does here as he says, "you did it in ignorance (verse 17)", but now I am going to show you the way because I have found the way out.

Times of Refreshing – 3:19

4th Word – Times of Refreshing / Floodgates Opened

The fourth word that unlocks the floodgates of His grace and love are the words, "Times of Refreshing".

(Acts 3:18 NKJV) "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

(Acts 3:19 NKJV) "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Verse 18 – Tying back to Prophets / “Therefore” – Everything just Said / Action - Repent

So Peter, verse 18 tying it back to the prophets, the OT Scriptures, all the prophecies of the Messiah says, “repent therefore”, thus relates to everything he has just said, and my what he has just said. So the action to take based on everything you have just heard is to repent.

Repent – So Sins Blotted – Sin Separates / Repentance – is His Presence (Psalm 16)

Verse 19 - Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord – So that your sins may be blotted out (for sin separates you from His presence – Isaiah 59), and times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord. Back to Psalm 16:11, for in His presence is fullness of joy (and note another key word in verse 10, Your Holy One, which ties back to Acts 3:14):

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)¹ Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened,

That it cannot save;

Nor His ear heavy,

That it cannot hear.

² *But your iniquities have separated you from your God;*

And your sins have hidden His face from you,

So that He will not hear.

Psalms 16:10-11 (NKJV)¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol,

Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

¹¹ *You will show me the path of life;*

In Your presence is fullness of joy;

At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Repentance is Refreshing – Pleasure Forevermore / Blotted – Obliterate / Will Forgive?

Repentance is refreshing; it is not a curse word as some people will make it, it is joy, it is where pleasures forevermore exist. The meaning of these words refresh my soul, the soul of a wretched sinner who did horrible things that offended the Holy God, but He says your sin, blotted out, which means to smear out, wipe away, erase, **obliterate** (my favorite), and then it also means to erase tears (as godly sorrow produces repentance 2 Cor 7:10). My Beloved, what sin do you wonder if He will ever forgive you? Apply these words to them, especially “Obliterate”!

G1813 ἐξαλείφω *exaleiphō* ex-ah-lee-fo

From G1537 and G218; to smear out, that is, obliterate (erase tears, figuratively pardon sin):—blot out, wipe away.

Times of Refreshing – Recovery of Breath – Sin Knocks Wind / Revival / Shower - Treadmill

So that times of refreshing may come, that word means “a recovery of breath”, as sin knocked the wind out of us, but through Christ Jesus we recover and stand, so much so a revival starts in our heart. Sin may be fun for a season, but eventually it will knock the wind out of you, and leave you in a place feeling empty and dirty, and you will realize, “I bought the lie”. But repentance is the fresh wind of God blowing over you, a heavenly shower cleaning you up, and then everyday you walk in repentance it is like the treadmill of heaven and your stamina and strength grows stronger and stronger, and you feel you can run through the brick walls of sin and temptation, because you are strong in the Lord.

G403 ἀνάψυξις *anapsuxis* an-aps'-ook-sis

From G404; properly a recovery of breath, that is, (figuratively) revival:—revival.

Sins Blotted Out – Not just for Israel – Every Man Today

The sins that killed the Author of Life can be blotted out. Those words are not just for them, but for every man, woman and child today, our sins can be blotted out, and revival can come from the presence of the Lord. What a masterfully sermon Peter is preaching here:

Psa 16:11 (NKJV)¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Times of Restoration – 3:21

5th Word – Times of Restoration / Floodgates Opened

The fifth word that unlocks the floodgates of His grace and love are the words, “Times of Restoration”.

(Acts 3:20 NKJV) "and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before,
(Acts 3:21 NKJV) "whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,
which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

What speaking of? – Kingdom Age / Wolf , Swords / 1st and 2nd Coming – Time is Now

What is Peter speaking of in terms of “restoration”? It is talking of the Kingdom Age, what all the prophets have spoken of, when the Messiah will be seated in Jerusalem ruling the earth, when the knowledge of the Lord will cover the whole earth just as the waters cover the sea, when every man will sit under his vine and eat, when trillions of dollars that was spent on the war machine will beat into plowshares, man will learn war no more, when the wolf will lie down with the lamb.

Peter is saying there is a period from the First Coming of the Messiah to the Second Coming of the Messiah, and that now is the time to receive Him as we will see in verse 23.

Zechariah 12:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Isaiah 11:1-10 (NKJV) ¹ *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,*

And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

² *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

³ *His delight is in the fear of the LORD,
And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes,
Nor decide by the hearing of His ears;*

⁴ *But with righteousness He shall judge the poor,
And decide with equity for the meek of the earth;
He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.*

⁵ *Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins,
And faithfulness the belt of His waist.*

⁶ *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb,
The leopard shall lie down with the young goat,
The calf and the young lion and the fatling together;
And a little child shall lead them.*

⁷ *The cow and the bear shall graze;
Their young ones shall lie down together;
And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*

⁸ *The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole,
And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den.*

⁹ *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,
For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD
As the waters cover the sea.*

¹⁰ *“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse,
Who shall stand as a banner to the people;
For the Gentiles shall seek Him,
And His resting place shall be glorious.”*

Micah 4:1-3 (NKJV) ¹ *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days*

*That the mountain of the LORD’S house
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,
And shall be exalted above the hills;
And peoples shall flow to it.*

² *Many nations shall come and say,
“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
He will teach us His ways,
And we shall walk in His paths.”*

*For out of Zion the law shall go forth,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

³ *He shall judge between many peoples,*

*And rebuke strong nations afar off;
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
Neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Suggest another Application / Word that Sings Out to Israel / Lev 25 – Year of Jubilee

But I suggest to you another application as Peter is using it, and that is that this word “restoration” is a word that sings out to these people of Israel, and that is the Year of Jubilee as spoken of in Leviticus 25, and 5 things would happen in the Year of Jubilee which happened every 50 years in Israel, and in a nutshell, it is total restoration.

The Year of Jubilee – the Restitution of all things:

- 1) All debtors forgiven;
- 2) Slaves released from bondage;
- 3) Liberty to all captives;
- 4) All families reunited;
- 5) Land reverts to original owners.

Leviticus 25:8-17 (NKJV) ⁸And you shall count seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. ⁹Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land. ¹⁰And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

¹¹That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. ¹²For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field. ¹³In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. ¹⁴And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. ¹⁵According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of years of crops he shall sell to you. ¹⁶According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to you according to the number of the years of the crops. ¹⁷Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

Word Sings / Forgiven – Debt Cleared – Land and Adam

The word restoration would sing out to these people, the Year of Jubilee has come (spiritually), God will forgive their debt of sin, they will be released from the bondage of their sin and addictions and religion, they will be reunited with their heavenly family, and the Devil has lost his claim to the title deed of the earth which Adam forfeited to the him.

Peter tying it all Together – Unlocking Floodgate / How about You

Peter is speaking of times of refreshing, times of restoration that comes from the presence of the Lord, and as these people would be tying all these key words together, he would be unlocking a floodgate of God's grace, love, His goodness and mercy upon the people and it is no wonder that 5,000 get saved. How about you today, in light of these things you have heard, are the floodgates of God's grace and love pouring out upon you?

Note on Restoration

There are those who say “the restitution of all things” spoken of here means that every person will one day be saved—(some even go as far including demons and even Satan). The problem with that interpretation is that Jesus didn't teach it. In Matthew 25:41, He spoke clearly of sending some into everlasting fire. The word “everlasting” is the Greek word *aiónios*, which is the same word used in John 3:16. Therefore, whoever says that the fire in Matthew 25 is not really everlasting—that people will only burn for a while until they're purged (i.e., purgatory), or until the restitution of all things—must also say that the everlasting life God promised in John 3:16 is equally transitory.

Matthew 25:41 (NKJV) ⁴¹“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Note on Restoration

Maybe you haven't heard too much about this type of theology. It is out there, it comes and goes like all other errant doctrines, and seems you can always find a remnant somewhere that it is there thing, but I want to make you aware of this errant doctrine, I want to make you well aware of it, because I believe we will see an increase in it in these last days. Now I do not want to say look at me I'm a prophet, but it was 3 years ago I said hey look out, here is the next new movement, and look out for it, it is called the Emerging Church. Now, 3 years later there are millions who have said they no longer align themselves with a mainline denomination, but are part of an Emergent Church. Now the Emergent Church is hard to define, as there are so many facets of it, some just want to meet in home fellowships and study the word together, nothing wrong there. But many Emergent Churches are going back to vain repetitions, chants, adding eastern mysticism into their services, adding pieces of Buddhism and other world religions into their services. But here is the part that I want to emphasize the most, and that is that many of these types of churches say there is no hell, there is no judgment to come, and that all sin will be forgiven by God. Some will say, the blood of Jesus covers all sin, even if you don't receive Jesus, and along with that, the Pastors no longer talk about sin, they just talk about the God of love, mercy, and grace – a very feel good gospel. It is a gospel that says; in the end all things will be restored, and all will be well. Many of the Emerging Churches are teaching dangerous doctrine, and if a person doesn't study the Word, they can easily be sucked into these errant doctrines, for doesn't that just sound nice, who could ever get upset at us if we preach that doctrine, hey it's ok what you do and what you believe, for in the end all is restored. But the truth is far from it. These Emergent Churches are not in good company either, as the Mormon teachings are pretty close to what I've just said, for they say those who become Mormons on earth will go right to heaven, but those that don't will suffer in the flames of hell for some period of time, and then be released and received into heaven. As for those Emergent Churches, not a company I would want to be in.

(Acts 3:22 NKJV) "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you.

(Acts 3:23 NKJV) 'And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'

Quotes Duet 18 / Most Respected Prophet – Ties it all Together

Peter is quoting Deuteronomy 18:19, Peter is confirming his words with the most respected Jewish prophet, and that was Moses. Peter continues to tie it all together quoting their most respected prophet – Moses.

Deuteronomy 18:18-19 (KJV) ¹⁸I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. ¹⁹And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

People could See – Only Jesus fulfills all the Prophecy

The people who are hearing this knew this prophecy about the prophet Moses spoke of could only apply to one person as they have heard Peter tie it all together, they knew it would have to none other than Jesus Christ, no one else could have fulfilled all these prophecies. When John the Baptist came on the scene they came to him and asked are you the One that was promised? But John will say no, I am the voice crying out in the wilderness, prepare ye the way of the Lord. They were waiting for the Lord, the Messiah, the Christ to come, and just as Moses (and Isaiah) said He would come, He did.

Matthew 3:3 (NKJV) ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make His paths straight.'"

Isaiah 40:3 (NKJV) ³ The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

"Prepare the way of the LORD;

Make straight in the desert

A highway for our God.

Verse 23 – Only 1 Way – No Other Way / Narrow Yes – Thankfully a Way

Verse 23 - *'And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'* - Even Moses said there is one way, and one way only, through the Messiah, whom we know is Jesus Christ. One way is called narrow-minded, but let it rebutted, praise the Lord that there is even a way for a sinner to come before a Holy and awesome God. Moses (God) says that whoever will not heed those words will be destroyed:

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

(Acts 3:24 NKJV) "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days.

Samuel 2nd Greatest Prophet

Samuel was regarded as the next great prophet after Moses, so Peter keeps confirming his sermon by the two greatest prophets that the people of Israel respected.

Peter says to Them – Jesus in the OT / For us – Look for Him in the OT - Fun

Peter is saying to them, search your Scriptures (we call them the Old Testament) and you will find all these things that I have spoken about the Messiah. To them, that meant your Messiah has come, the prophecies declare it for Jesus fulfilled it. What does this mean to us today, when you read your Old Testament, search, and you will find Jesus on every page. Search for Jesus on every page, and your study of the OT will be exciting, even fun as you search, and discover Him on every page.

Here is Fun One – City of Refugee

Here is a fun one, Peter said you did it in ignorance (verse 17); Peter is saying that they are accountable, responsible, yet done through ignorance. Remember Jesus prayed, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do..." The significance behind this idea is that ignorance makes the difference between premeditated murder and manslaughter. For manslaughter the remedy is a City of Refuge (Numbers). The city of refuge is where a person could go who accidentally killed someone (say the axe head came off while chopping wood and killed the fellow worker); well if you could get to the city of refuge the next of kin could not come seeking to kill you, a life for a life. Now the fun part, the person who accidentally killed someone was free to leave the city of refuge without fear of retaliation "after the High Priest" died. All debts were cleared. Jesus the High Priest, we have run to the city of refugee, he has died, and our ignorance of sin that killed Him has been wiped away. Now, for those who say I'm going to sin and I don't care about Jesus and His blood, I am fine on my own – well that is premeditated murder, and there is no city of refugee, and the next of kin will be coming for justice. So, every passage in the OT, we will see Jesus, if we look.

(Acts 3:25 NKJV) "You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'

(Acts 3:26 NKJV) "To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

Quotes Genesis 22

Peter quoting Genesis 22:

Genesis 22:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷*blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.* ¹⁸*In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."*

Israel Blessed 1st / Then all World / Outline Book of Acts / Still going 2000 years

'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' - not just the Israelites. Thus the outline of the Book of Acts, and how this book unfolds, and it has kept going strong for nearly 2,000 years now.

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Enjoy Times of Refreshing / Let Floodgates Open and Flow Over You

Precious people enjoy these “Times of Refreshing”, let the floodgates open, and let God’s love and grace flood over you.

Outline: Times of Refreshing – Opening the Floodgates (3:11-26):

- Men of Israel – 3:12
- His Servant – 3:13
- Prince of Life – 3:15
- Times of Refreshing – 3:19
- Times of Restoration – 3:21

Chapter 4

Where there is Smoke, there is Fire (the Disciples under Fire) 4:1-22

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Recap Chapter 3

In chapter 3 Peter and John on a routine mission of going to pray at the Temple end up in a divine and miraculous moment as a man who had been lame for years is made whole as he arises and walk. A great commotion starts in the Temple area as everyone knew of this man, Peter then preaches one of the most masterful sermons in all of the Bible, and the resultant is that 5,000 men respond for salvation in Christ. We now read of the first persecution of the early church, and it will become a recurring theme throughout the book.

Title / Outline

I have titled this message, "Where there is smoke, there is Fire", as we see Peter and John will come under fire for this healing, and will be put in custody for it. As with any fire, three agents are needed to produce a fire, and we see them here and will be our outline.

Outline: Peter and John under Fire

- The Agent (source 1 to fuel the fire) – 4:1-3
- The Spark (source to ignite the fire) – 4:4:4
- The Oxygen (source 2 to fuel the fire) – 4:7-8
- The Actual Fire 4:8-22

The Agent (source 1 to fuel the fire) – 4:1-3

Peter and John Arrested

(Acts 4:1 NKJV) Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them,

(Acts 4:2 NKJV) being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

(Acts 4:3 NKJV) And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

The Wood? – the Resurrection

So the wood of the fire (if you will) is that Peter and John are talking about the resurrection from the dead, and that Jesus (whom all these religious leaders knew of) did rise from the dead for HE has the power over death – thus making Him God.

Pharisees – Legalist / Sadducees Liberal /

Pharisees were the legalists. The Sadducees were the rationalists, the modernists, the liberals – they believed people should just be nice people and live by the golden rule. They also did not

believe in the resurrection. Pre-resurrection opposition was from the Pharisees; Post-resurrection opposition was from the Sadducees. In the Gospels, the Pharisees were the primary opponents of Jesus. Radical fundamentalists, they claimed Jesus and His disciples violated their rituals and traditions. Here in Acts, however, the Sadducees are the primary opponents of the church. Materialists through and through, they were upset with the church because of the stories of miracles and resurrections, angels and healings that circulated throughout Jerusalem.

The Spark (source to ignite the fire) – 4:4:4

(Acts 4:4 NKJV) However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

The Spark / Threatened / 5000 Men

The spark that sets them off is that 5,000 men believe Peter's message, and that is a hit on their livelihood and personal belief (for people will start to view them as errant and unknowing), and they feel threatened by so many following the doctrine of the resurrection. Just a note, it appears it was 5000 "men", so add woman and there was well over 5,000 people saved this day.

Heard – Believed / People – Share the Word / Like a Lion

They heard the Word – (and Believed) – Precious people, share the Word with the guys at work, the kids at home, your neighbors who are unbelievers, your mother-in-law, and your grandfather. Share the Word—it's powerful! Share the Word, get it out there as often as you can, even if you don't share the gospel with the unbeliever. When it rains, talk about Noah's Ark. When Israel comes up in the news, talk about the Temple, King David, Abraham, whatever you can. When you're walking by the Lake, talk about Jonah and the great fish; share the word, as often as you can, wherever you can, for the word has power to change life. The word is like a hungry lion, just let it out of the cage, and get out of the way.

Hebrews 4:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²*For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

Never Know how God use the Word / Deng Lo

You never know how God will use the word that you share. True story, there was a missionary sharing the word in china in the 1930's. Everywhere he went he would share the Scriptures and pass out copies of Matthew. One guy took one, scoffed at it, thought it would be nice paper to start a fire with. The mans name was Deng Lo, and threw the bible in the fireplace and said good riddance to it. The next day as he was cleaning out his fireplace there was a page that was burnt, but not fully, and he could still read what it said – "Lo I am with you always". Deng Lo got saved that day. People can try to ignore the word, walk away from it, burn it, but the word is powerful, so keep sharing it, keep talking about it.

Matthew 28:20 (NKJV) ²⁰*teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Peter and John Address the Sanhedrin

(Acts 4:5 NKJV) And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, (Acts 4:6 NKJV) as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem.

Annas – Aaronic Priesthood / Caiaphas – Appointed by Rome

Annas was of the Aaronic priesthood, but he was deposed by the Romans, and Caiaphas was put in his place. Caiaphas was the acting high priest, but appointed by the Romans; he was not of the line of Aaron. Caiaphas was in power for the Romans, but not really accepted by the Jews. Annas

Both Involved in Mock Trial

Both Annas and Caiaphas were involved in the mock trial and condemnation of Jesus Christ.

Kept Overnight

Verse 3 says they were kept overnight, and that was because it was their law (as recorded in the Talmud) that you couldn't try a person in the evening, so they have to wait until the morning; how interesting that they apply the law here, but not with Jesus as they would have the illegal trial at night. It amazes me, that so-called men of the word could still prove of their mistake with Jesus (as this lame man is proof of His Power), and still have such a hardened heart. Be wary of the desire to build your own kingdom, wield your own power, and receive your own glory, for it will blind you.

(Acts 4:3 NKJV) And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.

The Oxygen (source 2 to fuel the fire) – 4:7-8

(Acts 4:7 NKJV) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

(Acts 4:8 NKJV) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel:

The Oxygen – The Holy Spirit

The oxygen of this fire is the breath, the wind, of the Holy Spirit, and what a fire it stokes.

By what Power – Correct in Asking – Deut 13

Verse 17 "By what power or by what name have you done this?" – Their question is legitimate for Deuteronomy 13 instructed them to do so. If anyone performed a miracle, sign, or wonder, and that miracle did not attest to the God of Israel, the miracle worker, sign performer, was to be killed (stoned) for he would have been acting on behalf of the Devil. So these religious leaders asked the right question.

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 (NKJV) ¹"If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'— which you have not known—'and let us serve them,' ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Peter Filled – Greek filled Again / Need filled again for we Leak / Not Title - Condition

Verse 8 - Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said - The Greek grammar for this word "filled", means a new filling, to fill again. The filling of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was once, and now here is another. Christian we need to be filled daily, and as Moody said, because we leak. We need the Holy Spirit, continually. A Spirit-filled Christian isn't a title, it is a condition, and we need to be continually in that condition, filled with the Holy Spirit. Be filled (says Ephesians), a continual filling.

Ephesians 5:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Sanhedrin – 70 Theologians / Against 2 Fisherman / With Jesus – have Majority

Now the Sanhedrin council that was coming against them was made up of 70 religious leaders and the High Priest. So here are seventy of Israel's greatest theologians, and the High Priests, versus 2 fisherman, and they don't stand a chance because it's two fisherman filled with the Holy Spirit. They will speak and astound them to the point that they will say "how can they know these things, they are uneducated and ignorant fisherman, but they had been with Jesus. They were wrong in that, for Peter and John were still with Jesus, and you and Jesus are always a majority, even 70 stand against you. Ever feel overwhelmed, seek the "filling", claim the promise.

(Acts 4:13 NKJV) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

They Lose – Peter Filled / Don't worry what Say / Exciting take Word – See word Unfold

They lose because, "Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit - said". Jesus would say, don't worry what you will say when they bring you before the rulers, for at that time you will be given the words to say.

Jesus isn't filled with words; he is filled with a person. Peter was indwelt by the Living God. How exciting it is to take God at His word, and then to watch His word unfold and come to life.

Matthew 10:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

The Actual Fire 4:8-22

Wood- Oxygen – Spark / Buring on Peter – Moves to Religious Leaders

Now, the wood has been placed (the challenge of the resurrection), the oxygen of the Holy Spirit breathing from Peter, and the spark that 5000 believe and the religious leaders feel threatened. The fire is kindled, the fire is burning, and yes it is burning against Peter, but we will see that it soon spreads on to these religious leaders.

Peter Cowers Servant Girl – Stands in Power / By Fire – Filled w/Fire – Now Under Fire

We seen Peter cower at the fire before a servant girl, but now we see Peter with great boldness standing up before them in power. So there was Peter by the fire, then filled with fire, now under fire. How we need to be filled with fire to be able to withstand the fire.

If you Touched – Expect Heat / Satan will Launch Attack – Consider you Threat

If you have been touched by fire, then you should have times where you are feeling the fire. When you are on fire you will feel the heat. When the Lord comes upon you, inevitably Satan will launch an attack against you; his fiery arrows will be shot in your direction. So don't think it some strange when the fiery trials come; for you have been marked and targeted in hell as a man or woman who must be stopped, silenced.

1 Peter 4:12-16 (NKJV) ¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

Not more than Handle / Too many Cool Christians / Satan – no Threat

Fear not, for the Lord will not give you more than you can handle, but if you allow, the Lord will allow the fire that is burning upon you, to heat-up the people around you. Too many cool Christians don't want to get anyone heated up. You should get a little worry when things are all cool and comfortable in your life, for it very well may mean that Satan no longer considers you a threat. I think we should think it strange when all is cool and comfortable.

Fire can come from Religious – Family – Brother / Peter getting from all Over

Christian keep in mind that the fire won't always come from the world either, it can come from the religious people, it can come from you family, it can even come from a brother or sister in the Lord. When it comes from a brother in the Lord, I take every one of those and examine it closely, I ask myself if I am being a jerk, how does what they say align with the Word, am I taking it too personally and not willing to be corrected; but, I look at the messenger, how does what they say align with the Word, did they even quote the word, are they a people of prayer, are they a person who consistently and continually demonstrated they are seeking what is best for the Kingdom. Peter and John are really taking the heat, for doing good, and for serving God; I'm glad for 1 Peter 4:12, or else I'd constantly be asking myself, what did I do wrong, but God will say nothing, for you are a marked man, and I am proud of you.

(Acts 4:9 NKJV) "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well,

(Acts 4:10 NKJV) "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

Look at this Boldness – Peter Heating things Up

Look at Peter's boldness. He's saying, "We did this in the Name of Jesus Christ, whom you crucified." – Peter heated things up.

Not Seeker Sensitive / Peter Reverses the Situation – Face to Face with God / Go Offense

Definitely not a seek-sensitive service or message Peter is proclaiming. Now Peter is under fire, but he reverses the situation and by using the word of God, reverse the situation and put them under the fire of having to come face-to-face with the Living God. They think they are putting Peter in trial, but it Peter putting them on trial. Christian, don't let people put you on the defensive about Christianity, where they are taking jabs at you and you are ducting, blocking, bobbing and weaving. I don't let myself get wrapped up in that, I say to them, here is the gospel, you decide. Then it will be they that are on trial before the Holy God, and it will be they that have to decide what will they do with Jesus Christ, and in the end of this message of Peter, that is what these religious leaders are going to have to decide each one individually. When they challenge us about how could God allow children to die, take them back to the Garden, we can rule ourselves. When they challenge Evolution versus Creation, challenge them back to read the whole Bible first, hey you read books on Evolution, now read the ultimate book on Creation – the Bible. When they say He is distant and unloving, that them to the cross, and say now you decide.

(Acts 4:11 NKJV) "This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'

Peter quotes what Heard Jesus Say / Never Lose There

Peter quoting what he had heard Jesus had said, and that is a great example for us, just quote what we have heard the Lord say and we know we are in the right, regardless of the reaction of the hearer.

Matthew 21:42 (NKJV) ⁴²Jesus said to them, *"Have you never read in the Scriptures:*

"The stone which the builders rejected

Has become the chief cornerstone.

This was the LORD's doing,

And it is marvelous in our eyes?"^a

Quoting Psalm 118 / Tradition - Gehenna

Quoting Psalm 118:22, Peter referenced the construction of the temple. Tradition has it that in the days of the construction of Solomon's temple, although the engineers at the temple mount searched and searched, they couldn't find the cornerstone. A message was sent to the quarry: "Where is the cornerstone?" Word came back to the mount: "We sent it to you months ago." Then someone remembered: "Oh, maybe it was that stone we didn't know what to do with. It didn't fit anywhere, so we rolled it down the hill into the Valley of Gehenna." The Valley of Gehenna was the place of burning, the place of rubbish, the place where babies were sacrificed in the days of Ahaz, the place of weeping and sorrow, refuse and stench. And the rejected stone was indeed found in the Valley of Gehenna. Thus, Peter makes application, saying, "The Chief Cornerstone is Jesus Christ. This One rejected by you, this One who went to hell for you:

- is the Rock of Deuteronomy 32 (verse 4),
- the Cornerstone of Psalm 118 (verse 22),
- the Smiting Stone of Daniel 2 (verse 35),
- the Rock of our salvation." (Psalm 95:1)

Peter Later Write – We Living Stones / Husband – Boss – Friend / Miss that - Constant

Peter would later write that we as living stones are part of a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). Sometimes we rub each other the wrong way. That's what living stones are supposed to do. That guy you married (that boss, friend, teacher), the one you thought would be such a rock, turned out to be a blockhead. Why did you get stuck with him? Because that blockhead is the living stone who will knock the rough edges off you and prepare you for heaven. If you miss that God is doing some chiseling on you, then you will constantly being going through life bummed and depressed, aggravate and irritated, because people and places in your life are rubbing you the wrong way, not realizing you are being rubbed the perfect way, to become the perfect fit. You

may say, but I feel I am a better Christian when I don't have these things rubbing me chipping me; God will say wrong, you don't fit into My Temple, my body, into what I am trying to build in your life and My Kingdom.

1 Peter 2:4-5 (NKJV) *"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."*

(Acts 4:12 NKJV) "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Cross is an Offense – not Palatable / No One Challenge 1 Cure for Cancer / Sick

The cross is an offense, it is not made to be palatable, for it is a narrow way and narrow will offend. Why is it that people challenge "only 1 Way"? I've never heard anyone challenge that there is only one cure for polio; would anyone challenge and be upset if there became a cure for cancer? Would people say "only 1", you mean there is only one. They would be overflowed with joy, the relief that if/when cancer struck them, there would be "a" cure. People would never do that because they know that they are sick, and know that sickness will kill. Problem is today that the majority of people don't think they are spiritually sick.

People say too Narrow / Narrow in Aim

People say it is too narrow, well it is narrow in it's aim for God is a good shot. Ever see those guys shot an apple from 100 yards with a bow and arrow, no one says they are too narrow, rather they say they are a good shot. We have military people right here in our fellowship and they all have to qualify with their weapon, they can hit a bull's-eye from 100's of yards away (some even more than that), now we don't call them narrow, we call them marksman. God's salvation is anything but narrow,

- It is not narrow in accessibility, for it is all over the world (the whole planet).
- It is not narrow in durability for it has been preached for 2,000 years and it is still alive.
- It is not narrow in it's power for it is transforming lives daily all over the world.

Only Narrow in Aim – Aimed at Sin and Death

God's salvation is only narrow in it's aim, because it is aimed at sin and death, and it has hit the target dead-on, and has destroyed them fully.

Jesus is Way – Accessible – Available – Effective / He will change your Life Today

Jesus is the Way, and He is accessible, and He is available, He is effective, He is eternal, and He will change your life today if you will allow Him to for He is narrow enough to hit the target that He came to die for, your sin, and to make you a son or daughter of the Living God. I'll take that narrowness any day.

In His Name – Onoma / Water – Child – Baptism – Remission of Sin

Peter says "in His Name", and that is again the Greek word "onoma" which means all that He is, all His attributes. That name is powerful, and as for us, we may not be able to grab the hand of a lame man and say to him, "In the Name of Jesus, stand up and walk," but there are other things you can do.

- In Mark 9:41, Jesus said we can give a cup of cold water in His Name. Every one of us can go to someone who is thirsty, someone who needs a simple act of kindness shown to them, and say, "I'm doing this in the Name of Jesus because He's blessed me."
- He said we could receive a little child in His Name (Matthew 18:5). When you go to the nursery and change a diaper or two, you can do it in the Name of Jesus.
- We are to baptize in His Name (Matthew 28:19).
- We can pronounce the remission of sins in His Name (Luke 24:47). You can be a champion of the gospel, a carrier of the Good News to the person who is despairing and feeling he has failed miserably. You can say, "In the Name of Jesus, I want to tell you that your sin is truly forgiven and forgotten."

Mark 9:41 (NKJV) ⁴¹For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.

Matthew 18:5 (NKJV) ⁵Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

Matthew 28:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Luke 24:47 (NKJV) ⁴⁷and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

We can do Mighty Acts in His Name / Power, Love, Forgiveness

We can do acts in the name of Jesus, for there is power, love, and forgiveness in that name.

Peter and John forbidden to Teach or Speak in the Name of Jesus

(Acts 4:13 NKJV) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

Ignorant - Common

Ignorant” - really implies common, not ignorant in the sense of dumb, but rather common, of the street.

Been with Jesus – Impression give when Filled with Spirit

“They saw that they had been with Jesus” - that is always the impression given if you are filled with the Spirit.

Their Error – Still with Them

Here is their error, they had not been with Jesus, they still are with Jesus, for He said He would never leave them nor forsake, and that He will be with them to the end of the ages. Still true today.

Maybe feel Ill-Equipped / Spend Time – Lord Shine Through

“Who are these unlearned and ignorant men?” asked the Jewish leaders. “They didn’t study with our scholars. How is it they understand the Scriptures?” Maybe you say, I want to be more skilled with the word, I want to preach like Peter, walk in power like Paul, but I feel so ill-equipped, so unpolished, so disrespected; well the key is real simple, walk with Jesus. Spend time with the Lord and you will begin to take on the fragrance of the Lord and you will put the scholars to shame, because you will speak with such clarity and practicality because the word is in you and the Lord is shining from you.

(Acts 4:14 NKJV) And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.

Been Healed – Should Stand

If you’ve been healed shouldn’t you be standing with them!

Note – Lame Man Stood in Trouble / Jesus - Brother

Please note that the lame man not only stood with Peter and John in the temple (Acts 3:11), but he stood with them in their trouble. Peter and John were in hot water here, and this guy could have said, “Hey, this is a little heavy. Thanks for healing me, but I gotta go.” But he didn’t. He stood by Peter and John, even though he could have been executed with them.

You see, it’s easy to be friends in the temple. But you can only find out who your true friends are when you’re in trouble. So, too, you will be able to evaluate the depth of your friendship with Jesus by how willing you are to stand with Him in times of testing and difficulty. Stand with the Lord, fellow brethren, for He stood for you and stood by you. And stand by your brothers and sisters even when they’re blowing it, even when they’re in hot water, even when they’re in difficulty, even when they’re in trouble.

(Acts 4:15 NKJV) But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves,

(Acts 4:16 NKJV) saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

(Acts 4:17 NKJV) "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

All Jerusalem Knew of Him

The man who was lame previously had been healed—and all Jerusalem knew it.

That include Saul of Taurus / Lord Working back Here

All of Jerusalem, who all would that include? Now how exactly do we get these words? Peter and John were put outside, they didn't hear it. How did Luke get these words? I would suggest to you through the Apostle Paul, who prior to that calling was Saul of Taurus, part of the Sanhedrin, who would retell this story to Luke. I believe the Lord is working on Paul all the way back here, showing him His might and power, that would make Paul have to start asking the really hard questions of himself – just who is this man Jesus Christ.

Could say Nothing – Who can Argue his Testimony / Addict – Depression – All Us

Verse 14 - they could say nothing against it. - Who can argue his testimony, I was lame for 40 years now I can walk. Once I was blind but now I see. Once I was an addict, but now I am set free. Once I lived in the darkness of depression, but now I walk and live in the Light, Every saved person in this room has a testimony of equal power, and that testimony is affecting all who come in contact with it.

(Acts 4:18 NKJV) And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.

(Acts 4:19 NKJV) But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.

(Acts 4:20 NKJV) "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

Word enforced by Roman Law / Voice Slowly Silenced / Take Advantage Now

This council's word was enforced by Roman Law, so they are giving a Civil Order here, to go against this Order was to break the law. Slowly but surely our voice in this country is being regulated by law. It is a hate crime in some states to say the homosexuality is vile, it is a hate crime in some states to challenge Islam and say beware of the Muslim. In New Mexico a Christian photography was sued and lost, had to pay 7,000 dollars in damages because she refused to do the wedding of 2 homosexuals. This week California passed the law allowing Gay marriages; the next day on her show Ellen Degeneres announced her and her lesbian partner were going to get married in California, the response? A standing ovation for her by the audience. If you remain seated, you will be considered judgmental and a hater. What will we do, should the day come that it is a crime to speak the name of Jesus Christ, even though Jesus said to go into all the world? What will we do if the government says it will be illegal for the church to say homosexuality is wrong, and it will be a hate crime to do so? There comes a point in time where there is a higher court, and a higher authority. We should take advantage of all the freedoms we have today, for every day it may become harder and harder to get a public permit to preach Christ at the Inner Harbor.

(Acts 4:21 NKJV) So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done.

Let Light Shine

Let your light so shine, so that you may glorify your Heavenly Father.

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

(Acts 4:22 NKJV) For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

Man Lame 40yrs / Jesus still Working / We often Wonder – why aren't You Working

This man had been lame for forty years, but his healing came at the exact moment that would maximize glory to God and confirm the fact that although Jesus was no longer seen physically, He was still working through His church. So often we wonder, Lord, why aren't You working? I've been praying. I've been believing. Where are You, Lord? It's been forty minutes, forty days, or perhaps even forty years. Take hold, dear saint. Don't give up. At the right time, the Lord will work to His glory. You watch. You wait. You'll see.

You take care of the wood, god will take care of the spark and oxygen.

Outline: Peter and John under Fire

- The Agent (source to fuel the fire) – 4:1-3
- The Spark (source to ignite the fire) – 4:4:4
- The Oxygen (source to keep it burning) – 4:7-8
- The Actual Fire 4:8-22

Where do we Go in the Trials (The 1st Recorded Prayer)

Acts 4:23-31

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

The Deer – Wrong Side of the Fence

Thursday I was down in Davidsonville which is beautiful country down there, rolling hills, farms and mansions; well as I cruised the Interstate, I saw what I have seen many times before, a deer somehow getting itself on the other side of the fence. Probably by going through a hole in the fence, the deer found itself on the side of the fence right off Route 50, with hundreds of cars flying by at 65+mph. There poor deer was no different than any of the others that I have seen in times past, and that is totally panicking, totally freaking out, running up and down the fence line looking for an opening, some even trying to jump the six-foot high fence to no avail. It is a sad sight, you wish you could stop and say come here little guy, let me show you the way back into your peaceful and secure side of the fence. But as we know that will never happen, for the deer is in a total state of panic and its mind is racing, confused, and scared. Well as a pastor and personally myself, I have seen and I have been like this deer, somehow I have found myself on the wrong side of the fence (outside my peaceful and secure place), and I begin to have racing thoughts, my mind becomes confused, my heart rate becomes elevated, and I find myself like that deer, running, frantically looking for the opening to get back to that peaceful and secure state, but like that deer, my mind is racing so fast, I can run right past the opening because I can't focus and see. In our passage today, we see how Peter and John respond when they are on the other side of the fence, and we can and will glean plenty as we study this passage on the first recorded prayer of the early church.

Recap – Routine Prayer Trip / The Lame Man – Arise and Walk

To recap, Peter and John on a routine mission to go pray, have a divine and miraculous moment with a man who had been lame for 40 years. Those famous words were spoken, and signs and wonders followed. Immediately following the wonders came the opposition as the religious leaders come against them for they are now marked as threats against their egos and livelihood.

(Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Peter's 3rd Masterful Presentation / Now Severely Threatened

Peter for the third time presents a masterful presentation of the gospel, and because this lame man had been known by all for decades, they were left powerless to carry out any kind of openly persecution against Peter and John. However, they severely threatened them saying if you keep this up, speak anymore in the name of Jesus, we will get you and get you good.

(Acts 4:17 NKJV) "But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name."

Released – Return to tell what Happened / 1st Prayer – Can Apply Principles

So Peter and John are released, and return to their brethren to tell what had happened, and how God worked so mightily, and then they all enter into prayer together. We have here recorded the first prayer of the new church (Acts 2 tells of a prayer meeting, here in Acts 4 tells us the actual prayer), and we would do well to take a close look at it and how we can apply the principles of

this prayer to our personal and individual prayer life. Another message on prayer you might sigh, but I believe we can never study prayer enough – but let me say, lets not keep reading and talking about prayer, lets be busy about prayer, and may this study ignited the passion to do so.

Lets Read – then Break it Down

Let's read the whole passage and then come back and break it down verse-by-verse.

Prayer for Boldness

(Acts 4:23 NKJV) And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

(Acts 4:24 NKJV) So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

(Acts 4:25 NKJV) "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?

(Acts 4:26 NKJV) The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.'

(Acts 4:27 NKJV) "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

(Acts 4:28 NKJV) "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

(Acts 4:29 NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

(Acts 4:30 NKJV) "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

(Acts 4:31 NKJV) And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Early Church knows – Things Changed / Persecution now the Norm

The early church now knows things have changed, and changed greatly, they now know that opposition and persecution will now be the norm, not the exception. Their immediate response is unity, their immediate action is prayer, and their immediate result was peace, power and boldness.

Outline of "Where do we Go in the Trials":

- Their immediate response is unity (4:23)
- Their immediate action is prayer (4:24-30)
- Their immediate result was peace, power, and boldness (4:31)

Note – Not Lighter Load – Stronger Back

First thing to note church for the context of this whole study is that they didn't ask for a lighter load, but stronger backs.

Not Fully Comprehend

We may not fully comprehend this passage and the extent the persecution will mean to them; how it will affect their personal lives, their employment, their kids, their marriages; but I think everyone in this room can relate somewhat to persecution for all who have accepted Christ face some type of opposition and persecution at various times in their lives. Now, we surely are blessed in this country, and let me just share with you how blessed so you can appreciate the day you are enjoying here in good ole Pasadena Maryland.

- On the average (just this last decade), 171,000 Christians are martyred every year for their faith.
- Last century over 100 million Christians were martyred.
- More people martyred this past century than all the centuries combined.

- That is more people killed for their faith than all the combined deaths of all the wars combined in the past century.

Our Voice getting Hedged-in / Homosexual Hypocrisy

Last week we discussed how it appears that our voice is getting smaller and smaller as they are hedging us in through legislation of what we can and cannot say. We read repeated stories of students being sent home for wearing religious t-shirts, teachers being fired for talking about the Bible in class, or having a Bible on their desk, 10 Commandments being taken down from courthouses, nativity scenes left in the basement of Federal buildings – no longer allowed to be displayed. The homosexual community leading the charge that the church is intolerant, but what a lie that is for they don't want tolerance, they want endorsement, and when they don't get it they attack. It is the total hypocrisy, for they say the Church is judgmental, but every turn of the corner you have the homosexual community judging the Christian and the Church.

Live in Age – Growing Animosity towards Church / Happened Then – Now in USA

We live in an age where there is growing animosity towards us, the church, and I think it is interesting to look at how these disciples responded to this issue. For what is happening in this chapter 4, is what is now happening here in the USA, so thankfully for us we have a good blueprint to follow. So let's take a look.

Their immediate response is unity (4:23)

(Acts 4:23 NKJV) And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

Own Company – Beauty of trials / Well Outside – Pick at the Inside / Bloodshed - Quick

They went to their own company. That is the beauty about trials, tribulation, and persecution, for it brings the family back together. It seems that when things are well on the outside, that gives the church plenty of time to look at what is going on in the inside, and it doesn't take long to find things to pick at. It's easy to point the finger, and have a beam in our eye until blood is shed, and then very quickly we become the family of God, we become one again.

Not just Observation – but Identification – Where do you Go

I think also this isn't just a statement, but it is an observation, helpful for identification, in that where do you go when the pressure is on? Do you go to your own company, do you go to the Lord, do you come here to fellowship, or do you stop by the pub, or grab a 12-pack to go, get the remote or mouse and click the carnal-highway. When the pressure is on, where do you go? If you are going to the Lord, then rejoice and realize your faith has taken root. But maybe you don't go to your own, then examine yourself, make the appropriate adjustments where needed, and remember this story and remember it's outcome, for Peter and John are greatly threatened, tremendously pressured to quit, but they come back to their own and boldness, power, and peace are what they find. You won't find that anywhere else except in your own company.

Their immediate action is prayer (4:24-28)

(Acts 4:24 NKJV) So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

Notice – No Demonstration / Go right to Prayer

Notice they didn't try to get a meeting with the Sanhedrin and have a facilitator broker an agreement, nor did they organize a demonstration against religious discrimination, nor go to the Roman courts and file a complaint, but they prayed first. Now if they did those things after they prayed I think there nothing wrong with that (if that is how the Lord led them, but the first things they do is pray, the first thing they say is

(Acts 4:24 NKJV): "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

3 Elements of this Prayer

Please note with me three elements of this prayer.

1. His Works - (Who He Is) – 4:24
2. His Word - (What Is Happening to Them in light of the Word) – 4:25-28
3. His Will – (What they Want from Him according to His Will) – 4:29-30

1.) His Works - (Who He Is) – 4:24

(Acts 4:24 NKJV) So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

Start by Addressing Who He Is – Bowing To / Despotes – Extreme Ruler

They start their prayer by addressing who they are talking to, who they are bowing their knee to, and it is most interesting the Greek word used here for Lord. Usually the Greek word used for Lord is “kurios”, but here the Greek word used is “despotes”, which means “absolute extreme ruler”, today such a word is used in the negative sense as we apply its English version to a tyrant or dictator, but in that day it meant the one with the ultimate power, the final say. Now Josephus the Jewish historian writes that when Christians would be tortured, all they had to do to be released was to say the Caesar was Lord (despotes), the absolute power, the final word, but millions would refuse to do so.

despotes - G1203 - relates only to a slave and denotes absolute ownership and uncontrolled power

kurios - G2962 - has a wider meaning, applicable to the various ranks and relations of life and not suggestive of either property or of absolutism

Gather to Say – You are Ultimate Power / You are King – We are Yours / Twice Bought

So here these disciples gather together here in this prayer room, and in one voice say Lord, you are the absolute authority, the ultimate power, you are the one who created heaven and earth, the sea and all that it is in them. They are establishing who He is, and who they are. You are the mighty God, and we are your people, your children, we call you Lord and you are the King and we are the people of your Kingdom, and you care for us for you created us in your own image, and you died for us. You made us, you bought us with Your blood, we are twice yours. Lots of people created by Him, but not all are twice His.

Twice Mine

A childhood story sums up being twice mine. A little boy made a sailboat one-day with the help of his father. He got the wood from a tree, he used his dad's tools to shape the boat. He made the sail with some fabric. Then he sanded and sanded the hull until it was smooth. Then he painted it his favorite color. The day came and he took out to the stream, put it in the water and watched it float. Pride and joy filled his heart. But a sudden wind came and pushed the boat out into deeper water and the boy couldn't get it, then it drifted out into the current and started down the river. The little boy followed as long as he could, but eventually it drifted out of sight. A heartbroken boy. Weeks later he and his father are downtown, and they pass a hobby shop, and there in the window was his boat. He said father I want to buy my boat back, his father said son at that price it will cost you everything you have...the boy said it will be worth it. As he walked home with his boat, he held it tight in his arms, joyful that it was his again, and he said, "I made you and I bought you, you are twice mine." So Jesus says of you.

2.) His Word - (What Is Happening to Them in light of the Word) – 4:25-28

(Acts 4:25 NKJV) "who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?

(Acts 4:26 NKJV) The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.'

(Acts 4:27 NKJV) "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together

(Acts 4:28 NKJV) "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

Everything Happening as You said it Would / Thus You allowed It

Quoting Psalm 2, they are now saying, Lord what is happening is exactly what you said would happen; in fact everything that is happening is happening because you allowed it to.

Psalms 2:1-4 (NKJV)¹ *Why do the nations rage,*

And the people plot a vain thing?

² *The kings of the earth set themselves,*

And the rulers take counsel together,

Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,

³ *"Let us break Their bonds in pieces*

And cast away Their cords from us."

⁴ *He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;*

The LORD shall hold them in derision.

Disciples Heard Jesus say – thus it is Written – Thus it must Play Out

The disciples had heard Jesus say in His own life, this is what was written, and thus this is what must play out (my paraphrase). Jesus said on many occasions as things happened, hey it's written, and therefore it will be:

Mark 12:10 (NKJV)¹⁰ *Have you not even read this Scripture:*

'The stone which the builders rejected

Has become the chief cornerstone.

Matthew 26:23-24 (NKJV)²³ *He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. ²⁴The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."*

Matthew 26:31 (NKJV)³¹ *Then Jesus said to them, "All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written:*

'I will strike the Shepherd,

And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

Matthew 26:52-54 (NKJV)⁵² *But Jesus said to him, "Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. ⁵³Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?"*

Disciples now Like Jesus

The disciples are now like Jesus, they say hey this is what the Scriptures say, and that is the way it will be. In verse 25 they quote David from Psalm 2, "In Psalm 2, Father," the believers prayed, "You told us that the heathen would try to come against You and Your people—just as we're seeing here. We acknowledge that this is all in accordance with Your will."

Matthew 5:10-12 (NKJV)¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,*

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Peter later Write

Because of this Peter would later write, "Think it not strange when fiery trials come upon you" (see 1 Peter 4:12). When persecution comes, it is in accordance with the Word and the will of the Father.

1 Peter 4:12-16 (NKJV)¹² *Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.*

Queen Sheba 2 Wreaths / Bees

An ancient story is told of the Queen of Sheba. She sent two wreaths of roses to Solomon, one real and one artificial, to test his reputed wisdom. She defied him to detect the genuine from the artificial. Solomon at once directed that some bees be brought into the room and of course, they immediately flew to the real flowers and thought nothing of the counterfeit. So it is with us as believers. When we find ourselves overwhelmed, surrounded, being attacked from every side with the bees of revile and persecution, it simply means they recognize that we are the real deal! Our beautiful aroma attracts those scary bees but the Lord, in the end, "Where,[oh bees], is your sting?"

As they Lived Psalm 2 – We now Live 1 Peter 4 / We need to Remind Ourselves - Written

This is important for us; for as they lived Psalm 2, we now live 1 Peter 4:12. I am ever so amazed at myself when persecution or tribulation comes my way and I ask God why He is allowing it, even though the Scripture promise it to be so. When we pray, after we establish who is in the ultimate authority, we need to then establish and remind ourselves what is happening in our lives is what is written in the word. 2 Timothy 3:12 says that all who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer, and interestingly enough that verse is only a few verses away from verse 16, that says all Scripture is given by inspiration, for inspiration (my paraphrase):

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

As remind Written – Shouldn't be Surprised / World Events – Despote / You Said It

As we remind ourselves of these words, let us be reminded of what is said how the last days will be, in that men being lovers of pleasure rather than good, the doctrine of demons, men being disobedience, all the things spoken of in the last days, we shouldn't be surprised (again see 2 Timothy 3 is written in the context that says all Scripture is given by inspiration, for inspiration (my paraphrase). When we look at the world events, we can be appalled at the actions of man with war, terrorism, rapes and murders, homosexuality rising up, but on the other side we say but you Lord are "Despotes" you are the ultimate power, and congress and Washington, aren't running the world, you are, and it is all happening as you said it would.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, ²speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron,

2 Timothy 3:1-7 (NKJV) ¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Early Church Israel Existed – Today's Church Israel Existed

I just have to throw something out there for ya also, I believe we are more like the early church than any other church, for as they lived, Israel existed in the land, and then there was a pause of Israel in the land for 1900 years, and now as we live, Israel once again exists in the land – that means to the Evil One, that in one word God can say, "times up", so his attacks are fast and furious upon all who will oppose his plans.

Compartmentalized / Word in Light of Circumstances

Now, this doesn't just apply when you are being persecuted, but in all times, good and bad; when we pray, we need to seek the Scriptures as we do. We are so often compartmentalized, where we have 3 chapters of reading, then 15 minutes of prayer, then 3 worship songs. When we pray, all three of those things should be merged together. When you are faced with whatever it is in your life, search you memory bank, sit there with the Word opened before you, and let the confirm what is going on in your life. When we pray, we must see our circumstances in light of God's Word

- These disciples let the word confirm what is going on, this is what the Word said would happen. Doubtfully, but maybe Peter and John questioned if they should have done what they did when and where they did. Maybe they thought we should have gone to his house and did it there. But as they pray, the word confirms what they did and where they did it was right. So the word can be for confirmation, and it may be for examination, is what I did the right thing, if not is there something I need to be correcting here.
- Seeing our circumstances in light of God's Word also means seeing when there is a sin problem. Then, we should say with the Psalmist, When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans. The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up. (Psalm 32:3-4). Perhaps we are in the same place the Psalmist was, in sin and needing to confess and get right with God. Christian, confession is the ultimate CTRL-ALT_DEL, 1 John 1:9, if we confess our sins (there is our control/choice to start the cleansing process – for confess means to agree with, and the word shows us what we need to agree with), He is faithful to forgive us of our sins (there is the Alternate – in that God can change guilt to forgiveness), and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (there is the Delete – as God will obliterate, totally wipe that sin away). Repentance, 1 John 1:9, is the Christian bar of soap to get clean.
- Maybe when we are in conflict, perhaps we need to know we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age. (Ephesians 6:12)
- We also use Scripture in prayer to pray the promises of God. When we need strength, we can pray according to Ephesians 3:16: That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. God's Word will speak to our situation!

Psalms 32:3-4 (NKJV) ³ *When I kept silent, my bones grew old
Through my groaning all the day long.*

⁴ *For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;
My vitality was turned into the drought of summer.
Selah*

1 John 1:8-9 (NKJV) ⁸*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Ephesians 6:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Ephesians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,*

Pattern – Who Is – What Happening

The disciples give us the pattern for prayer in Who He Is, and what is happening, and how does that align in the word. Do this in your prayer, and you will find power and peace, because you will have faith, because faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Interesting their Request

It is interesting what they request in light of all these things.

3.) His Will – (What they Want from Him according to His Will) – 4:29-30

(Acts 4:28 NKJV) "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.

(Acts 4:29 NKJV) "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word,

(Acts 4:30 NKJV) "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

No Fire from Heaven – Nor Change Circumstances / Give us what Need

John and James aren't asking for fire from heaven upon the Sanhedrin, nor are they saying change the circumstances (for they recognize God has them in the circumstance – it is His will), they aren't saying get us out of the circumstances, but give us what you want us to have for this circumstance. Now that is what I do when things get hot for me, I say Lord change the circumstance, or get me out of here; but not these guys, they say Lord grant us boldness, let us not be timid and weak, let us not fail in what and where you have put us.

They ask for Boldness / Not Arguing God's Sovereignty – Nor their Responsibility

They ask for boldness with His Word. They are not arguing if they should be where they are at, they are not arguing His sovereignty, nor as you notice are they arguing their responsibility. God allowed it, now I am to respond and have responsibility according to His words and ways. God's sovereignty and man's responsibility are like conjoined twins with one heart, and if you try to separate them from each other, one is going to die. Too much on the side of sovereignty, and man is no longer responsible, or too much on the side on man's responsibility God no longer sovereign.

He is Sovereign – Ask for our Participation

God is sovereign, and in that He asks for our participation.

Church didn't ask for a Break – But Boldness in Persecution / That Prayer Prevails

The early church didn't pray that they might have a break from persecution, but that they might have boldness in persecution. And that kind of prayer prevails!

Hot times – Pray to be Changed / The Crucified always Arise

Maybe you are going through some hot times, the fire seems to be licking your body, don't pray for the circumstance to change, pray that God will change you in the circumstance, and in the end you will be glad that you did, for you will be changed forever, and become more like Jesus Christ as you come through that fire. Let me tell you this, those that are being persecuted, criticized, judged, wrongly accused, attacked, the subject of gossip, slandered, and/or mocked – let me tell you, there is a spiritual law at work here, and that is that "crucified" will always arise. If you are being crucified for doing good, for seeking after the things of the Father, when all is said and done you will rise higher than you previously were, if you will not react in the flesh, but react as the word would call you to. Jesus said Father forgive them they know not what they do, and when all was said and done, the crucified arose, So too will it be for you.

Their immediate result was peace, power and boldness (4:31)

(Acts 4:31 NKJV) And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Pray when Shaken Up – They pray to be Shaken Up

We often pray when we are shaken up. These guys prayed so they could be shaken up!

Immediate Result - Filled with Boldness / Power =Confidence – Peace / He is in Control

The immediate result of their prayer was that they were filled with boldness. Boldness is power, for we walk in the confidence of the Lord, and power will bring peace for we know He is in control and we will have peace in that. Is that what you want, is that where you are at in your Christian walk?

Last 3 Months – If we Open – God wants More

I really believe that for the last 3 months as we have picked these verses apart over chapters 1-4, that anyone here that is open to the things of the Lord, who isn't living in compromise, but truly open to what we have been hearing the Lord say, we all have come to the place that God wants more, that He doesn't want us to be satisfied of where we are at in our Christian walk, but that we will desire depth and change in our lives to make us more like Him.

Not to go Witnessing, Deal with Sin, Shake dust of Complacency, Fire of God in Us

Not just so we can go witnessing, but that when hard times come we will stand for Him, that when sin comes before us we will deal with it violently as we would an intruder coming into our home, that we as a body of believers would be unified and in one accord, that we would shake the dust of any complacency off of our lives and let the fire of God burn within us, and give us boldness in this last hour. Be still, hear the Lord call that to you today.

Ice House / Be Still

Psalms 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. "Before refrigerators, people used ice-houses to preserve their food. Ice-houses had thick walls, no windows, and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut from the frozen waters, hauled to the ice-houses, and covered with sawdust. Often these ice-blocks would last well into the summer. One man lost a valuable watch while working in an ice-house. He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile. A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the ice-house during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch. Amazed, the men asked him how he found it. "I closed the door," the boy replied, "lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking." (story taken from "Directions" by James Hamilton). So often life can become so hectic that it becomes hard to find time to sit still and just listen to what the Lord is saying. But Jesus often secluded himself, so that He could commune intimately with His Father. In these days and in this hour it's so imperative that we spend time in our own prayer closets, so we can clearly hear what our Father is saying to us, through His still small voice. If we do, we may find some wonderful and valuable things that others have missed.

Psalms 46:10 (NKJV)¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations,

I will be exalted in the earth!

Filled Again / Condition not Title

These guys were filled with the Holy Spirit, again. Spirit-filled Christian isn't a title but a condition. May we be a people who continually are asking God to be shaken up, and filled up.

Ephesians 5:17-18 (NKJV)¹⁷Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

Sharing and Tearing (Acts 4:32 – 5:11)

Politician at Pearly Gates

While walking down the street one day a US senator is tragically hit by a truck and dies. His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance. "Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you." "No problem, just let me in," says the man. "Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from higher up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity." "Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the senator. "I'm sorry, but we have our rules." And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him. Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people. They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and champagne. Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it is time to go. Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises... The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens on heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him. "Now it's time to visit heaven." So, 24 hours pass with the senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns. "Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity." The senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell." So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage. He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above. The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder. "I don't understand," stammers the senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?" The devil looks at him, smiles and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning..... Today you voted."

Tale of 2 Hearts / Sharing & Tearing

Well in our passage of Scripture today we will see the tale of 2 hearts, in verses 32-37 of chapter 4 we see the people sharing all that they had for the well being of others, and then verses 1-11 of chapter 5, the story of Ananias and Sapphira who like the politician, is putting on a show for the people, as what is in their heart is totally contrary to what they are saying. The title of this study is, "Sharing and Tearing", as we see the comparison of the giving heart for the glory of God, versus the self seeking heart to receive glory and praise from man.

Recap - Overview

To recap where we have been in our studies, the Holy Spirit has come upon the disciples, God is doing a mighty work, thousands upon thousands have come to receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior, miracles are being done by the disciples, persecution has come upon the church, and we pick it up there in verse 32

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Sharing all Things

(Acts 4:32 NKJV) Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

Share Freely – Not Communism / Takes more Spirit to Serve than Speak in Tongues

They shared together not out of compulsion, but out of compassion; not out of obligation, but out of love. This isn't communism for it was not mandatory. We see Spirit filled people, giving and serving others, and I will tell you, it takes more Holy Spirit to serve others than it does to speak in tongues. It takes power to cut away from ourselves and serve others; Jesus said the greatest in the Kingdom will be servant of all.

Matthew 20:26 (NKJV)²⁶Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

See Love in Full Force / John 13:35

We see love in full force here, just as Jesus said, by this all will know you are My disciples by your love one for another.

John 13:35 (NKJV)³⁵By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Do you Ask Yourself if Filled / Tell-Tale Signs (Serve & Unity)

You may ask yourself, I don't speak in tongues, have I then really ever received the gift of the Holy Spirit (speaking of the empowering, not residence of the Holy Spirit that comes at salvation). Want to know if you are Spirit filled? Well here in our study today we see a few tell-tale signs in that Spirit filled people are those that are serving others, and in unity (one heart) with others. Lots of people who claim to be filled with the Holy Spirit I see cause division; the Spirit brings unity, and if you find yourself causing any division in the body, know that isn't the Holy Spirit working in you, for the Holy Spirit brings unity. This church we read of here has power, as they are building each other up, taking care of each other, and pouring their love out upon each other freely.

(Acts 4:23 NKJV) And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

(Acts 4:24 NKJV) So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them,

W-E-L-L Church

This church we have been reading about is well, very well. In our studies over the last 3 months we have seen that they are a:

- **Worship Church** – as we have seen them praising and worshiping the Lord in prayer and the breaking of bread (Communion).
- **Evangelistic Church** – as we have seen them making disciples just as Jesus had commended us to.
- **Learning Church** – as they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine
- **Loving Church** – as we see them taking care of each others needs.

(Acts 4:33 NKJV) And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Kept to Central Message – Resurrection / Power for Life / Watch out for Social Gospel

Again, the central message of the early church; important to keep that balance, for today many churches and people are doing a lot of great things of helping out those in needs, but have ceased proclaiming the gospel and the resurrection power. The resurrection is the power of the gospel, for Jesus had the power to overcome sin and death, and for all who will receive Him as

Lord and Savior, will have that same power in their life. We must keep that as the forefront of the ministry, and be careful of being drawn into bringing a social gospel, which is one that helps the needs of people and protects the environment, but falls short of proclaim the answer to man's ultimate need, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

(Acts 4:34 NKJV) Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,

(Acts 4:35 NKJV) and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

(Acts 4:36 NKJV) And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

(Acts 4:37 NKJV) having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Totally Voluntarily / No Chapter 11 – Send Economic Stimulus Check / Freely Giving

Again, this is totally voluntarily, no compulsion, no pressure coming from the disciples that if you don't give the ministry will collapse; God is going to have to file Chapter 11. Peter didn't send a newsletter out with pictures of their tattered ropes, or frayed television cables, saying they are about ready to go off the air. Peter didn't say that God told him there are 3 people there today who can sell their house and give it to the ministry, or write a 10,000 dollar check. I can only imagine how many churches are having triple tithe Sunday being that this is "Economic Stimulus" month, and everyone is getting their checks from the IRS this month. But what we see are people freely giving.

Greek Words (All – Much) / Broke Bread House to House

It says that "all" who were possessors of land or houses sold them; now the Greek word there for all is used for "all", but it is also used for "much or many". The best interpretation for the Bible is the Bible, and we can see that the word isn't "all", and has to mean "much or many", because in other passages it says that they broke bread from house to house, and thus if they sold their houses they couldn't have broken bread from house to house:

Acts 2:46 (NKJV) ⁴⁶So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

Acts 5:42 (NKJV) ⁴²And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Acts 8:3 (NKJV) ³As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

See Love in Full Force / John 13:35

We see love in full force here, just as Jesus said, by this all will know you are My disciples by your love one for another, and we see the dynamic power in a believers life when they are willing to share.

- **Single Hearted (Unity)**
- **Having an Other-Centered Mind**
- **All things, becomes His Things**
- **Released from the grip of Materialism**
- **Elevated into the Heavenly.**

Single Hearted – Other Centers – All Things His – Release Materialism - Elevated

God, through His Holy Spirit, desires to move us into "sharing" because sharing has dynamic power in the believers life.

- Single Hearted (Unity) - As a person shares, they are like this early church with a Single heart, a heart of unity, and there is tremendous love and power when the body of Christ is in unity.
- Having an Other-Centered Mind - Sharing takes our eyes off ourselves, unto others, and as I say if you want to make yourself miserable, just keep thinking about yourself and you will quickly become depressed. You will be depressed about what you don't have, or what you do have (that you don't like), you get all stressed-out worrying about it. But share, and you think less of yourself, more of others, and will find yourself more content on what you do have, thankful that you are the one giving rather than have to be receiving.
- All things, becomes His Things - As you share, you will come to the truth and fact, that all that you do have, is given to you from God, it is a gift from Him. Dangerous place to be when we start taking credit for what we have, if you have it because you are smart, than thank God for giving you intelligence. If you have it because you work hard, than thank God that He has given you a mind and body that can work hard, and that He has opened-up the opportunity to get that job, or have that client.
- Released from the grip of Materialism - As you share you are released from the grip of materialism, got to get more to be secure, got to protect what I got. Yes you should use wisdom in those areas to increase and secure, but not at the expense that you now trust in yourself more than you trust in God. As a person shares, they watch God bless and continue to provide and they are released from the pressures of materialism.
- Elevated into the Heavens - Finally, sharing elevates a person into the heavens, as you become just like their Lord, freely giving of themselves for the glory of God.

Luke 6:38 (NKJV) ³⁸*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

Good Verse-by-Verse / Easy to Contract Again / Do you Look at Yours? / S-H-A-R-E

Christian, it is good to go verse by verse, so we can come back and reexamine how we are doing in those areas. Especially in the area of giving and sharing, it is easy to find ourselves tightening back up, taking back, reducing the outgoing, because we forget the power of sharing. Christian, do you look at you home, your car, your stuff, your money, and ask yourself, "what can I do with these things to bless not only myself, but other?" S-H-A-R-E, it has dynamic power in a believer's life.

Chapter 5

Sharing – now Tearing / How Related you Ask? / All that I Have – All that I am

Well there we saw “sharing” and now in chapter 5 we see tearing. We see how hypocrisy tears at the church, and tears apart a person. How is there a relationship between sharing and hypocrisy you may ask? They are related through “what God has given”. All that we have and own has been given to us by God, and all that we are is who God has made us. All that I own is a gift from God, I fully know that, and praise Him for His grace and to place me in this Country of all countries.

Am what Am – No Chuck Smith / Make think I am – Hypocrisy / Insult to God – not Happy

All that I am, I am what I am; I am no Greg Laurie, I am no Church Smith. Now God is not done working on my, and maybe someday I will be of that spiritual stature (if you will), but for me to try to make you think that I am, for me to act like I am, is hypocrisy.

Just as Sharing Releases Us – Accepting who we Are Releases Us / Col 2

God hates hypocrisy because it says to Him (from us), I am not happy with whom you have made me, I want to be someone other than what you have made me. All that I have is from You; all that I am – is from you. And, just as sharing releases us from the grip of materialism in this world, accepting who we are in Christ releases us from the grip and bondage of trying to gain the approval and praises of men. When we grab hold of, understand that we are complete in Him, then we will be free to live full for Him. But if a person wants the approval and praises of man, they don't fully understand, they have not fully grab unto the fact, that they are complete in Christ. I pray this study will take us one step closer to that freedom.

Colossians 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; ¹⁰and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

Lying to the Holy Spirit (Ananias and Sapphira)

(Acts 5:1 NKJV) But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession.

(Acts 5:2 NKJV) And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

The “but” Ties Back to Chp 4 / Context Important / Barnabas Aved – Pauls Companion

The “but” ties us back to the previous verse, of Barnabas giving all his land to the church. The context is important for us, for this is the introduction of Barnabas, who later will be the Apostle Paul's traveling companion and teammate of one of the greatest missionary teams to ever walk this earth. What we are reading here is a radical and exciting conversion in that Barnabas was formerly a Levite, a priest, from the group that is now persecuting the church. Imagine the excitement when a Levite, turns against and away from the other religious Levites and says, I see it, Jesus is the Messiah we have awaited. The other Levites are going to hate him, but as news spreads through the church people get excited, wow did you hear, another priest has called Jesus Lord. How excited would the church get today if Britney Spears gave her life to the Lord, or Tom Brady of the New England Patriots, or if the President of Iran did; the church would be in buzz of excitement.

(Acts 4:36 NKJV) And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus,

(Acts 4:37 NKJV) having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Barnabas saved Radically / Levites and Land / Religious – Not Obedient / Totally Sold-Out

Well Barnabas gets saved, gets saved radically, so much so he sells all he has and then in a very short time is out on the missionary trial. Critics challenge this passage, they say there is a contradiction here for Levites were not to own land (Duet 14:29), for God was to be their portion. Well it could be this was family land, some kind of inheritance, but more possibly I could believe, it was his land, land that he had purchased even though a Levite wasn't suppose to. I remember growing up religious, but not accepting and applying every rule passed down to me. I picked and

chose the ones I liked, and threw out the ones I didn't, no need to think Barnabas was any different. But Barnabas has an encounter with the Living Savior, and his life changes radically, so much so he goes back and starts cleaning house, literally, Lord you called me to be a Levite, and for all the years I served in the Temple I didn't know you, I did my own thing according to my own ways, and when you came, I totally missed it, and couldn't point the people to you, and it was my job to do. Lord, I wasted all those years doing my own thing, my own way, yet you still chose to save me, to meet me, to call me to Yourself. Lord, with what I have, and what I have left, I give to you, and will serve you with all my heart. Oh Christian, may that be the cry of our heart, Lord I spent and wasted years of my life on foolish things, Lord with what little time I have left may I pour out all that I have out unto you.

Ephesians 4:20-24 (NKJV) ²⁰But you have not so learned Christ, ²¹if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: ²²that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, ²³and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.

(Acts 5:2 NKJV) And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet.

(Acts 5:3 NKJV) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?"

(Acts 5:4 NKJV) "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

Satan the Source / Satan sees Threat – Works now on Inside

Notice the source here, Satan has filled your heart, hypocrisy is lying, and Satan is the father of all lies. Satan recognizes that threatening them from the outside only caused unity, and prayer, it only caused them to come to their own company, we see Him come with another tactic, and that is to try to work from the inside-out. By Acts 20, we will see wolves have crept in. Satan is always looking for a way in to try to destroy from the inside out.

John 8:44 (NKJV) ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

Acts 20:29-30 (NKJV) ²⁹For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. ³⁰Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

Peter Exercises Discernment / Clear – It was Your Money / 1st Recorded Hypocrites

Peter is exercising the gift of discernment. Peter making it clear, it was your money to do with what you wanted, there was no one asking for it. So here we see the first recorded hypocrites in the Bible. The word for "hypocrisy" as it originated was the word given for actors on a stage, and they would wear masks to cover their real expression, one mask had a big frown on it, the other had a big smile, or anger, or tears, whatever they wanted to portray to the on-lookers. Well that is what is happening here, Ananias and Sapphira are trying to portray something they are not to the on-lookers.

NYC Restaurant

I am told there is a restaurant in New York City whose business is thriving because of hypocrisy...A couple is seated, and the maitre d' hands them menus. Both contain the same items, but because the prices listed on the woman's menu are three times higher than the prices on the man's menu, when the man says, "Order whatever you want," the woman is highly impressed.

Point – Hypocrites in Church from Beginning / God deals with Them

It is good to point that hypocrites have been in the church since the beginning of the church so don't get all surprised or bent out of shape when you see one in your church; but please note, God deals with the hypocrites, He dealt with them then, and He will deal with them today, for He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV)⁶ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

(Acts 5:5 NKJV) Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.

(Acts 5:6 NKJV) And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him.

1st Mention / Think it be Something Big

As I study the Bible I like to look for “firsts” in the Bible, first mentions in the Bible. It interests me that the first recorded sin of the New Testament Church is hypocrisy. You would think God wants to send a loud and clear message of what will destroy a church, what kindles His anger, it would something like, murder, stealing, adultery, abusing the widows and orphanage, but we see it here – hypocrisy.

Why? – Kills, Destroys, Tears

The first sin mentioned in the new church is hypocrisy; why, because hypocrisy kills, it destroys, it tears apart.

- Hypocrisy keeps a person from being open and honest about their personal sin, thus it never comes to the surface and never gets dealt with, and the person never overcomes it.
- Hypocrisy then keeps a person from ever helping another with the same problem, because they will never admit they have their struggle. So now a multiplying factor is at work.
- Thirdly, hypocrisy kills the witness of the church to the world, for the world can clearly see it, and says if that is Christianity, then who wants it. Just a note on that, Jesus said “follow Me”, not follow My people, for He is the way, the truth, and the life,

John 14:6 (NKJV)⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Police Officer Traffic Stop

A police officer pulled a driver aside and asked for his license and registration. "What's wrong, officer," the driver asked. "I didn't go through any red lights, and I certainly wasn't speeding." "No, you weren't," said the officer, "but I saw you waving your fist as you swerved around the lady driving in the left lane, and I further observed your flushed and angry face as you shouted at the driver of the Hummer who cut you off, and how you pounded your steering wheel when the traffic came to a stop near the bridge." "Is that a crime, officer?" "No, but when I saw the 'Jesus loves you and so do I' bumper sticker on the car, I figured this car had to be stolen."

(Acts 5:7 NKJV) Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

(Acts 5:8 NKJV) And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much."

(Acts 5:9 NKJV) Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out."

(Acts 5:10 NKJV) Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband.

(Acts 5:11 NKJV) So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

No Gossip

Interesting to note they don't wait for his wife but just go out and bury him. Amazing, a church of 10,000 and gossip hasn't spread to reach her of what has happened 3 hours later.

Peter gives Opportunity to Repent / Submit to God not Husband

Peter gives her an opportunity to repent. Just a note, Ephesians says we are to submit to each other as unto the Lord, not sin; our submitting to each other is never in contradiction to the word of God, so Ephesians is that answer to whether a wife is to submit to her husband (believer or not) to the point of sinning.

Ephesians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹submitting to one another in the fear of God.

Names of Ananias & Sapphira

Ananias – which means “God is gracious”, but He is also Holy as we see in this story. Sapphira – which means “beautiful”, but we will see beauty is only skin deep.

Power of Holy Spirit comes with Purity / We say – Want to See Holy Spirit Work

The power of the Holy Spirit comes with the purity of the Holy Spirit. How we say, Lord I want to see the power of the early church today, why don't we see that today. With the power comes the purity; are we willing and ready for the purity part, if we are, then the power part will come.

D.L.Moody

D.L. Moody has been influential in my personal life as I study and read about his life and ministry in the 1800's. I remember reading a story about how D.L. Moody was preparing to lead a revival throughout England to which an elderly pastor protested and said, "Why do we need this 'Mr. Moody'? He's uneducated, inexperienced, etc. Who does he think he is anyway? Does he think he has a monopoly on the Holy Spirit?" A younger, yet wiser pastor stood up and responded, "No, but the Holy Spirit has a monopoly on Mr. Moody." Do you truly want to be monopolized by the Holy Spirit? Let's face it -- the degree of fullness of the Spirit of God is in direct proportion to the intensity of our true desire. The reality of the spirit-filled life is -- we have as much of God as we truly want.

Oh that we may be a People – Content being Complete / Accept that in Others & Self

Oh that we may be a people desiring after the Spirit of God; and may we be a people that are content in knowing that we are complete in Him. That all that we have is a gift from Him, and all that we are, is what He has made us. May we accept the fact that He is not done doing His work in us, it is a lifetime process. May we accept that of each other in this room today, that God has some work to do in that person sitting next to you, that person (s) that will ride home with you today; and secondly, and as important, realize you are far from complete, and that if you will yield yourself to the Lord He can do what He wants to do in you, and you/we need not put on the masks to make people think we are something that we are not. That we will accept each other just as they are, and expect to be accepted just as we are, and together we can help each other to become all that God wants us to be. In the end, the world will see.

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

Let me just read you the words to this Casting Crowns song, and may they become a prayer to our heart:

"Stained Glass Masquerade" – Casting Crowns

Is there anyone that fails
Is there anyone that falls
Am I the only one in church today feelin' so small

Cause when I take a look around
Everybody seems so strong
I know they'll soon discover
That I don't belong

So I tuck it all away, like everything's okay
If I make them all believe it, maybe I'll believe it too
So with a painted grin, I play the part again

So everyone will see me the way that I see them

Are we happy plastic people
Under shiny plastic steeples
With walls around our weakness
And smiles to hide our pain
But if the invitation's open
To every heart that has been broken
Maybe then we close the curtain
On our stained glass masquerade

Is there anyone who's been there
Are there any hands to raise
Am I the only one who's traded
In the altar for a stage

The performance is convincing
And we know every line by heart
Only when no one is watching
Can we really fall apart

But would it set me free
If I dared to let you see
The truth behind the person
That you imagine me to be

Would your arms be open
Or would you walk away
Would the love of Jesus
Be enough to make you stay

Invitation Open

The invitation is open.

Decisions Made Easy (5:12-42)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Watching Church Develop – If Honest with Self – Make some Adjustments

We have been watching the early church grow and develop and I think if we are truly open and honest with ourselves, we see within ourselves the need to make some course corrections in our own lives in terms of priorities, in terms of purity, and in terms of power. As I read of the early church there is created a longing in my heart to walk and live as they did, in the simplicity of heart, and in one accord with other and God. The teaching I have received and been conditioned to in reference to the Holy Spirit coming upon the believer, I find I can be more focused on the tongues of fires, the rushing winds, the building shaking, and the masses getting saved and the church growing, that I can find myself forgetting that the Holy Spirit is a person, and that He has a mind, a personality, and He is directing the work of the Church, directing the conforming of me into His image. So as I pray for this fresh filling of the Holy Spirit it isn't simply the request for power in my life, but the person of God coming and fellowshiping with me in a special and wonderful way. The question isn't how much of the Holy Spirit that I have, but how much the Holy Spirit, God Himself, has of me. As we pray for a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, we pray for a fresh filling, a fresh communion with Him, a person, the person of the Godhead.

Spirit still Directing Church / Challenges in Horizon

And, let us not forget that as the Holy Spirit directed the church of 33AD, so He is still intimately directing the church of 2008, and how vital that is for the days that we live in. As this early church faced the challenges of their day with persecution, with the command to not speak in His Name, as the horizon of religion was changing so dramatically, I see an amazing parallel for the days we live as more Christians have been martyred in the past century than all other centuries combined, as the Christian voice is being silenced slowly but surely, with every new law and ordinance being passed, and how dramatically the horizon of religion is changing today as we see false religions increasing at breakneck speed, and Biblical Christianity becoming a slice of what it once was. The church today is facing things that no other generation has ever seen, and it good that we have this church study and apply to our lives and condition today.

W-E-L-L Church

This church we have been reading about is well, very well. In our studies over the last 3 months we have seen that they are a:

- **Worship Church** – as we have seen them praising and worshiping the Lord in prayer and the breaking of bread (Communion).
- **Evangelistic Church** – as we have seen them making disciples just as Jesus had commended us to.
- **Learning Church** – as they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine
- **Loving Church** – as we see them taking care of each others needs.

8 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)

- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)
- They found Power in Evangelism (2:1-41)

To Stay Well – Have to Make Decisions / Title: Decisions made Easy

Well, to stay well the church and the disciples have to make some decisions, and of course we as a church and individuals are daily required to make decisions (some large, some small). The title of this message is “Decisions made Easy”, as we will see people having to make decisions (large decisions at that).

Outline: Decisions Made Easy

- Decisions about Trials we are In
 - We can choose to be Perplexed
 - We can choose to be at Peace
- Decisions about Civil Obedience:
 - We can choose to Obey
 - We can choose to Object
- Decisions about other people’s Advice
 - We can choose to Receive it.
 - We can choose to Reject it.

Apostles do many Signs and Wonders

(Acts 5:12 NKJV) And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch.

(Acts 5:13 NKJV) Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.

(Acts 5:14 NKJV) And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

1st Time Mentions Woman / Remarkable considering Culture of Day

Multitudes were added to the Lord, and for the first time, Luke mentions the salvation of women. Both in his Gospel and in Acts, Luke has a great deal to say about women and their relationship to Christ and the church. There are at least a dozen references in Acts to women, as Luke shows the key role women played in the apostolic church. This is a remarkable thing when you consider the general position of women in the culture of that day (see Gal. 3:26-28).

Galatians 3:26-28 (NKJV) ²⁶For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Highly Esteemed – but kept Distance / Annais Penalty / Direct Link Purity & Power

People held the early church in high esteem, but they didn’t rush to join. After hearing about the penalty for Ananias’ lie, can you blame them? The Book of Acts shows us that there is a direct link between purity and power. Today many a Christians have totally forgotten the purity part of Christianity, and too many a Pastors have left the teaching of purity, and the repentance of sin, and the holiness of God:

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV) ¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, “Be holy, for I am holy.”

Not the “In” Place / Those touched – Place to Be

Although the church was no longer the “in” place to hang out for anyone and everyone (after seeing the move of God with Annais and Sapphiria), those who had truly been touched by the Lord said, “This is where I need to be: in the place of power and purity. Even if it’s painful, even if I’m smitten, and even if I’m uncomfortable from time to time, this is where I’ll stay.” The Book of Acts illustrates how intimately purity and power are linked together. Many times, we sing, “More love, more power...” when in reality our need is less sin and less carnality. A wise and loving Father, knowing the results of the misuse of power, will not give it to those who are not pure.

Impurity Dealt With – Power Returns

We will see now that the impurity (Annais and Sapphire) have been dealt with, the power returns to the Church. Maybe you feel a departing of power in your life, it may not be that you need to pray for more power, but you may need to ask the Lord to search you and try to see if there is any wicked way in you. If there is, once you deal with it, the power will follow thereafter, for purity and power are directly linked together.

(Acts 5:15 NKJV) so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.

(Acts 5:16 NKJV) Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

Shadow – Point of Contact / Oil Symbolizes Holy Sprit

Peter’s shadow was not powerful in and of itself. It was simply a point of contact and a place of release for people who were prepared to receive healing. It was the people’s faith that healed them, not the shadow. For these people the shadow was a point of contact for them, in that they knew God could heal, if they would just put themselves in the place to be healed. It is like the anointing with oil (as James says); and it is not the oil heals, but the faith to believe what the oil symbolizes, and that is the Holy Spirit moving upon the persons’ life.

James 5:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

First Decision / Perplexed or Peace

Now we move into the apostles being imprisoned because of the jealousy of the religious leaders, and while imprisoned they will have to make a decision about their situation, should they be perplexed and think they are doomed, or will they have peace and know that God is in control. That is the same decision for every person here today, for every trial you are in; will you be perplexed and become filled with anxiety and uncertainty, or will you trust that God is in control and has allowed the situation in your life.

Decisions about Trials we are In

- We can choose to be Perplexed
- We can choose to be at Peace

Imprisoned Apostles Freed

(Acts 5:17 NKJV) Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation,

(Acts 5:18 NKJV) and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

Sadducees Opposed to Supernatural

Vehemently opposed to anything having to do with the supernatural, it is no wonder that, after observing the multitude of healings, the Sadducees were filled with indignation. Although the Sadducees were a numerical minority, they were the ones who held the purse strings as well as the political power.

Sentence Structure – Right in middle of Preaching / All 12 Apostles Taken

The way the sentence is formed here it appears that right in the middle of their preaching, they come and grab them and drag them away. It also appears that all 12 apostles were cast in prison together.

(Acts 5:19 NKJV) But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said,

(Acts 5:20 NKJV) "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

Lord's Humor – Uses Angel / Releases them with Very thing they Don't Believe In

Got to love how the Lord deals with the wise of this world, for these Sadducees don't believe in the resurrection, miracles, nor angels, and here is the Lord releasing the apostles from prison by the hand of the angels. Later He will choose an earthquake to release them from prison, but here just to show the foolishness of the wise, he releases their prisoners from prison by the very thing they don't believe in.

Believe in Angels / 19 Prayer Warriors

Do you believe in angels? Did I ever tell you that story about the man in the mission field, he was going to be attacked by these savages as he hiked from one spot to another, but they didn't attack. Later the leader told him the story of how they were going to attack him when he went to sleep, but when they came in the middle of the night he said you had 19 huge men surrounding you, so big we ran. The missionary was alone, and knew it was the Lord. He was retelling it to the people at his church when he returned, and then a person said do you know what day it was, and he said such and such day, and the man in the church said that was the day we felt a tug on our heart to have a immediately prayer meeting for you, we prayed through the night for you. Then the man said, all who came to pray that night please stand up, and they counted them, and the number was 19. Ohh the power in prayer, what an arsenal we have.

Set Free to Go Proclaim – Not personal Pleasures

Verse 20 - Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." - Isn't this a pattern for our own lives? We are set free so that we may proclaim all the words of this life, instead of being set free for our own pleasure and comfort.

Words of Life / Future & Today – John 10:10 / Bible all About Life

Verse 20 - "All the words of this life"—I like that phrase! You see, we're not just talking about future life, afterlife, or eternal life. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life now and have it more abundantly" (see John 10:10). Life is what the Bible is all about. I don't understand those who say, "Well, the Bible's great and it's a good starting point, but we have more to add. We have some innovative techniques, some educational tools, and some resources that were unavailable to those who penned the Bible that can help heal people psychologically and emotionally." Peter would later write that God has given us everything that pertains to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). It's all in the Word.

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) ³as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Email about His Word

This week I got an email from a person who told me I was "deluded" for believing what I believe: *I will gladly follow god or Jesus if he simply asks. For some reason an omnipotent being doesn't like to talk to the people he's trying to lead. You cannot command an army without communication. I've tried praying many many MANY times. No contemporary historian even mentions Jesus. I study genetics in my spare time, it's more useful than studying the Bible because I KNOW it might actually help someone in the future. Sorry, evolution wins this round my deluded friend.*

The key to his email is that he believes that God doesn't talk to him, therefore God doesn't exist. But you can see, he has tried to talk to God, he wants God to talk to him, but since he hasn't heard from God, he considers that proof of God's non-existence. What he doesn't understand, as what I responded to him, was that God is talking to you, God is talking to you through me, so that I may tell you this, God will talk to you, through His Word (this Bible). God's Word, magnified above His Name, and yet at that Name every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess.

Psalms 138:2 (NKJV) ² *I will worship toward Your holy temple,*

And praise Your name

For Your lovingkindness and Your truth;

For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.

Philippians 2:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹*Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

God speaks through Word

God speaks to man through His word, and His Word, are "all the words of life", through this love letter to us. The apostles can choose to be at peace while imprisoned, because Jesus had told them, gave His word to them, go therefore and make disciples. They are imprisoned by being obedient to Jesus' Word, and therefore they can have peace compared to being perplexed, because they know they are being persecuted just as Jesus said they would. Those that are perplexed and anxiety filled during a trial are those who have forgotten His word, whether that word is "I am with you always", or "greater is He that is in the world, than he that is after you after (my version)", or "nothing can separate me from the love of the Lord", and the list goes on and on.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

Matthew 5:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹*"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ()*

1 John 4:4 (NKJV) ⁴*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." ⁶So we may boldly say:*

"The LORD is my helper;

I will not fear.

What can man do to me?"

Every Decision based on Word.

For the rest of our study, we will see that every decision is to be based in the Word.

[Apostles on Trial Again](#)

(Acts 5:21 NKJV) **And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.**

Another Slap – Right back to Temple to Preach / No Man, Gov't, Prgm / OBT

Here is another slap in the face to the religious leaders, they go right back and start to preach and teach. All the people watched them get hauled away, and now all the people see them back teaching. God preaches a loud message to all the people, no man, government, or program can nor will stop the work of God. And, this event proves to the people that what they believe, they believe. I remember when I would go street witnessing on Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando, it was a strip of drug dealing and prostitution. The police at first assumed I was there to buy drugs because there would be no reason a person of my color and clean clothing would go there. I remember one day sharing the gospel with a group of men, and as they walked away a man turned back around to me and said, is this for real, is this true, its almost too good to be true; and my reply to him was, if it wasn't true, would I be here – and he said with a big smile, nope,

therefore it must be true. The disciples going back proves to all that they preach too, it is true, so true we can't stop talking about it.

No Procrastination

"They entered into the temple early in the morning." I like that! It doesn't say, "They went into the temple the first chance they had," or "They waited until noon." No, following their release from prison the night before, the apostles headed straight for the temple early the next morning. The largest nation in the world today is procrasti-nation. No doubt about it! Our tendency is to say, "Thank You, Lord. You freed me from prison. You freed me from eternal damnation, from meaningless existence, and from emotional depression. You opened the door for Me, Lord, and I'm going to share Your gospel with others real soon, I am going to start living full-on for you, totally sold out—maybe at noon, maybe tomorrow night. I know You told me to go and share the Word with everyone. And I'll get right on it, Lord—pretty soon." Procrastination is a real problem in spiritual life and spiritual discipline. When the Lord speaks to your heart, be it in Bible study, in devotions, through a book you read, or through a sister or brother, learn to respond immediately. I read of one very wealthy inventor who said, "Without exception, after I have invented something and patented it, at least ten men come to me and say, "I thought of that a long time ago." But the difference between their poverty and my wealth is that they thought about it, and I did it." The same thing is true spiritually. There are those who think, You know, I really should share my faith, or I really should intercede, or I really should get involved, I should turn from that sin or that poor relationship. They think and they think and they think, while they remain poor spiritually. The ones who are used by the Lord, and walking in power, are those who hear and do. If the Lord has spoken to you, go do it, and do it now. I know whatever He has told you to do is not burdensome, for His burdens are light. If He has told you to do something, then it is doable, so go and go now and do it. The world around us needs these words of life, and the Lord would speak to us today, go to the temple and tell them. Afraid to, I challenge you to pray for boldness for the next 10 days, and see what the Lord will do about it.

(Acts 5:22 NKJV) But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported,

(Acts 5:23 NKJV) saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!"

(Acts 5:24 NKJV) Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be.

Insider Info – Apostle Paul

Again this insider information of what is being said behind closed door here is probably Saul of Taurus who would become Paul the Apostle for he was part of the this council.

What's Next – how far will this Go

These officials were greatly disturbed. "What next?" they wondered. "Where's this thing going to go? Where's it going to stop?" Good question!

The A-Team

Now this makes me think of the A-Team, remember that television show. It was like every show they would get captured by the bad guys, and the bad guys would throw a bunch of grown men in a machine shop for safe keeping until they came back to kill them. Oh what could they possibly do untied with a bunch of steel, a welding machine, gasoline, blow torching, and power tools. Hey just throw them in there what is the chance of escaping from there. Well the show must have been inspired from this story here in Acts, as the religious leaders say, alright lets throw them in prison (together), I'm sure that story we heard about them praying and then a sound like a hurricane came, and fire was upon them was just a story they made up. What is the worse that can happen when these 12 men get together, and pray.

Now make Decision on Civil Obedience

Now the apostles will have to make a decision on whether to obey the Civil authorities, or to object and obey God. It may not be too far off that some of you here today may face this same decision.

Decisions about Civil Obedience:

- We can choose to Obey
- We can choose to Object

(Acts 5:25 NKJV) So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

(Acts 5:26 NKJV) Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned.

(Acts 5:27 NKJV) And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them,

(Acts 5:28 NKJV) saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Filled Jerusalem / Wonderful Compliment

Verse 28 - you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine - How I love that when we are accused of this, preaching His doctrine. I find it a wonderful compliment when people of Anne Arundel County calls us legalistic, calls us narrow-minded, and one way. How I hope that someday as we continue to keep-on-keeping-on, that we will one day be accused of filling this whole County with His doctrine.

(Acts 5:29 NKJV) But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men.

Exact Language – We must Obey

The exact language is "We must obey God," declared Peter. "Even though you have legislative and political authority, the fact remains that there is a higher authority than you: God. He has told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. We have no other recourse than to obey Him." Their decision, decided them, it determined who they were and how they would live, and my how they lived in power and purity.

*****FW Boreham *****

We make our decisions, and then our decisions turn around and make us – FW Boreham

God has Set Authority – but Authority can't Contradict His Law / In the Scriptures

God has set men in positions of authority in order to maintain peace (Romans 13). But if the authorities the Lord has ordained acts contrary to Him, we must submit to Him rather than them. Consequently, should there come a time when those in authority say, "We're not going to allow witnessing on the streets or in public places because it violates the separation of Church and State," we must not submit to that kind of law. We answer to a higher Authority who has commanded us to share the Word wherever we go (Matthew 28:19).

Civil disobedience is not uncommon in the Scriptures.

- The midwives in Egypt were told to destroy all of the Jewish male children. They refused, and God honored them (Exodus 1:17, 21).
- Rahab the harlot hid the spies who were sent in to scope out the Land, and she withstood the questioning of civil authorities. God blessed her and put her in the line of Messiah (Joshua 2:4; Matthew 1:5).
- Against the king's command, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego did not bow their knees to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. God blessed them and stood with them in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3:18, 25).

- Daniel refused to cease from praying three times a day, even though doing so was in direct violation of the law. God honored him and saved him in the lions' den (Daniel 6:10, 21, 22).

How about at Work

People often ask me about witnessing at work, and I think you should, if and when the opportunity arises, but only if it does not hurt your employer. Your employer did not hire you to witness, he hired you to work, so do your work, and witness on your coffee break:

2 Important Requirements

However, regarding biblical civil disobedience, there are two important requirements to keep in mind.

Scriptural Authority

Civil Disobedience Must Be Carried Out with Scriptural Authority - The angel of the Lord said to the apostles, "Go speak in the temple" (see Acts 5:20). In addition, Jesus had already commissioned them, saying, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel" (see Matthew 28:19). Thus, the disciples weren't following a nebulous feeling; they were following the Word of God. You see, one cannot simply say, "God told me I can go seventy-five miles per hour in this thirty-five-mile-per-hour zone," or "I'm not going to obey my parents because I just don't feel right about what they're saying." If you are going to disobey your parents, oppose the leading of your husband, or contradict the laws of the land, it must be by the authority of Scripture.

With Humility

Civil Disobedience Must Be Carried Out with Humility - Peter and the apostles willingly took their lumps. In every case throughout Scripture, those who said, "We can't do this because we have a higher authority," did so without hostility, bitterness, or violence.

(Acts 5:30 NKJV) "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.

(Acts 5:31 NKJV) "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

(Acts 5:32 NKJV) "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

Not going to Back Down

"You allowed Jesus Christ to be crucified and hung on a tree, but God has exalted Him," declared Peter. "We're not going to back down from this message", for our message is the words of life. The Prince, which means "Author", thus the Author of Life has come to die so that you may have life. We must speak, "all the words of life".

Now Advice of the Wise

Now our attention turns to the people, and the advice from one who was literally considered one of the wisest men in all the world; and they will have 2 choices, to receive his advice or reject it. Now problem getting advice today, people are always ready to give their advice, even if most of the time it really just their opinion; what do we do when it comes, even when it is from those considered to be leaders, wise, experienced?

Let me Add – Acts 17:11

Let me add here, Acts 17:11, which says don't believe a word Ray says, but search out everything he says.

Acts 17:11 (NKJV) ¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Decisions about other people's Advice

- We can choose to Receive it.

- We can choose to Reject it.

[Gamaliel's Advice to the Religious Leaders](#)

(Acts 5:33 NKJV) When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

(Acts 5:34 NKJV) Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while.

(Acts 5:35 NKJV) And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.

(Acts 5:36 NKJV) "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing.

(Acts 5:37 NKJV) "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed.

(Acts 5:38 NKJV) "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing;

(Acts 5:39 NKJV) "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest you even be found to fight against God."

Cut means Sawed

Cut to the heart means literally "to be sawed", so this is no surface wound for these men, this has cut right to the bone.

GAMALIEL THE ELDER / Rabban (Master) – President – Renowned – Beauty / Mishna

GAMALIEL THE ELDER, A brilliant thinker and one of the most influential teachers in all of Jewish history. Gamaliel was rabbi of the Pharisees, president of the Sanhedrin and the first rabbi to be honored with the title of rabban (Heb., "teacher" or "master"), afterward granted to all heads of the Sanhedrin who were descendants of Hillel. Gamaliel was a renowned teacher of the Law. Due to his knowledge of the law and because he walked with great integrity in his attempt to keep the law, Gamaliel was called "The Beauty of the Law" by his contemporaries. There is a statement in the Mishnah (mSot 9:15): "From the time that Rabbi Gamaliel the Elder died, respect for the Torah ceased; and purity and abstinence died at the same time." It is a relative contrast presented as an absolute. It means that no one afterward had the same respect for the law as had Gamaliel.

Paul's Teacher / That we would have that Thirst

Gamaliel was Paul's teacher, Jewish historians tell us that Gamaliel's one criticism of Paul was that it was impossible to find enough reading material for him. This is not surprising, since those who study Greek tell us that Paul's vocabulary and sentence structure is the most sophisticated of any Greek writer. The guy was brilliant. Oh that we would pray to have that kind of hunger and thirst for the Word the way Paul did. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled.

Matthew 5:6 (NKJV) ⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

Gamaliel Advise / Human Energy it will Fail / Of God – Fighting against God

Gamaliel said, "If what these guys are doing is through human energy, it will come to nothing. But if what they're doing is of God, you'll be fighting against God, and you won't have a prayer. So back off. Let them go. Don't forget what happened to Theudas," continued Gamaliel. "Men gathered around him, and when they were slaughtered, the movement died as well. And what about Judas of Galilee? When he launched an insurrection, his followers also perished in the process."

Sound Good – Horrendous Advise / 300 Prophecies / Master Teacher Missed it

Gamaliel advised neutrality, to wait, watch and see. Sounds like great advise, but the fact is that the evidence was overwhelming. These men were the ones who should have known the 300

prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, that in itself is enough, but God in His grace gives them miracles to see with the lame man healed, the prison doors open, and not to mention the boldness of the apostles. To see or not see if something is of God is not to see what it becomes, but what the word of God says. Gamaliel's advice is terrible advice, so much so that he will lead not hundreds, not thousands, not hundred of thousands, but literally million of people astray by not pointing to Jesus being the Messiah. I talked to a Jewish man just last week and he quoted me something that Gamaliel (the beauty of the law) had said. Oh if Gamaliel would have pointed to the Messiah, if he would have said Jesus has to be the Messiah, 300 prophecies fulfilled by this man Jesus, I am the Master Teacher, I know this book, and I can tell you Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law; my precious people, follow Jesus Christ, follow the teaching of His Apostles, and Father God forgive me for not seeing it sooner. But he doesn't, and still today is leading people astray.

All Advice – Must be Examined by the Word

Any advise you get from any person, must be examined according to the word of God. Lots of people want to give advice, but if it doesn't align with the word, ditch the advice.

Neutrality Approach Alive in Church Today

I'll tell you what also, this neutrality approach to life is ever so present in the church and believers today. How many times I've heard a Believer who is dating a non-believer say, I asked God if this isn't from Him to break us up; no, end it and end it now for the word has already confirmed it that you should not be unequally yoked. People entering business ventures with non-believers, and they say "if God's in it, then it will be blessed", no even if you make a million it doesn't mean that God is in it, God says not to be in it, there is no waiting to see what becomes of it.

2 Corinthians 6:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?*

(Acts 5:40 NKJV) **And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.**

(Acts 5:41 NKJV) **So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.**

Beat Them – Skinned Them / Blood Flowing – High-Fiving

Beat them is the word that would be used for the whipping, so all 12 of them would have been whipped 39 times; but the Greek grammar structure says that as they are leaving (immediately after the whipping) they were rejoicing that they could suffer shame for his name. Beaten can also be translated skinned; the beating they received stripped the skin off of their backs, imagine, blood flowing, barely able to walk, probably helping to hold each other up, and these guys are high-five each other, man you were awesome, no brother you were awesome. What do you do with guys like this, they are unstoppable.

Winston Churchill

Winston Churchill once defined a fanatic as someone who can't change his mind and won't change the subject. That's what these guys did. They wouldn't change their minds, and they didn't change the subject. Knowing Jesus is Lord, they kept talking about Him wherever they went.

(Acts 5:42 NKJV) **And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**

Good Meal Lord

Preaching – the proclaiming of the gospel, evangelism. Teaching – instructing, feeding the flock. Good word from the Lord, good meal. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst, for they shall be filled:

Matthew 5:6 (NKJV) ⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

Chapter 6

Church Works (6:1-7)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Great things Happening / But Growth Brings Problems / Widows not Treat Equally

We are in chapter 6 in our study through the Book of Acts, and great things are happening in the church; people are getting saved, even some of the priests in the Temple. The church is growing, and like any growing family or church, there will always be problems that arise and need to be dealt with. In our study today the problem that arose was that not all the people (more specifically a certain group of widows) were not being treated fairly and equally, as we will read that Hellenists widows (which were most likely not Jewish woman born and raised in Israel – thus considered foreigners even though they were Jews) were not getting the same food rations as the rest of the Hebrew widows (that were born and raised in Israel).

Title – Church Works / How Suppose to Work / Church Works when it is Applied

The title of this message is called "Church Works", and it is a play on words as we see in our study today how the Church is suppose to work, as the disciples establish the structure and priorities the church is to have so that it may prosper spiritually; and secondly, when we apply these principles, corporately and individually, we see that "Church Works", and that when individuals follow God's design for the Church, and how that design includes them personally, how involvement in the Church (the things of the Lord) will take them deeper in their personally walk with Jesus Christ, and how they will greatly impact the world around them.

Outline: "Church Works":

- How God Works in His Church (6:1-4)
- Who God Uses in His Church (6:5-7)

Seven Chosen to Serve

(Acts 6:1 NKJV) Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

(Acts 6:2 NKJV) Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

(Acts 6:3 NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

(Acts 6:4 NKJV) "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

(Acts 6:5 NKJV) And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

(Acts 6:6 NKJV) whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

(Acts 6:7 NKJV) Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Churches have Problems / Problem result of Growth / Sometimes seems Starting

Well first things first, churches have problems; somehow people think churches should have no problems, should be perfect, and should always operate on cruise-control. If the early church had their problems, then every church today should expect their fair share. Their problem is a result of a great thing, people were getting saved and coming into the church, and the church growth was what caused the problem. Hey no church growth, no problems. Stay the 120 in the Upper Room and everything would have stayed just fine and dandy. Praise the Lord for problems like these in the church. Many times me and Renee say it seems like we are continually just starting at the beginning; and in a sense that is true because with each new area of church growth comes the need for the church to figure out how to handle it and bring the greatest spiritual return as we can.

Man on Deserted Island

There will always be problems in the church and it is important that we realize that and accept that so that we may be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. I'm reminded of the man who was rescued off a deserted island after 10 years. When he was rescued they noticed the 3 beautiful building that he had built during his stay and asked him what they were used for. He said well the building on the right there is my home, and the building on the left there is my church. Well what is that building in the middle they asked, oh said the man, that is where I use to go to church.

Problems are Opportunities

Some people look at problems as only problems, and not the opportunities they present. In the text we just read, we see that the problem produced 4 opportunities, and all 4 of those opportunities brought back tremendous spiritual returns to the individuals and the church.

1.) to Examine the Ministry and make Adjustments

When a church faces a serious problem, this presents the leaders and the members with a number of opportunities. For one thing, problems give us the opportunity to examine our ministry and discover what changes must be made. In times of success, it is easy for us to maintain the status quo, but this is dangerous. Henry Ward Beecher called success "a last-year's nest from which the birds have flown." Any ministry or organization that thinks its success will go on automatically is heading for failure. We must regularly examine our lives and our ministries lest we start taking things for granted.

2.) to Exercise Faith

Church problems also give us an opportunity to exercise our faith, not only faith in the Lord, but also faith in each other. The leaders suggested a solution, and all the members agreed with it. The assembly selected seven qualified men, and the Apostles set them apart for ministry. The church was not afraid to adjust their structure in order to make room for a growing ministry. When structure and ministry conflict, this gives us an opportunity to trust God for the solution. It is tragic when churches destroy ministry because they refuse to modify their structure. The Apostles were not afraid to share their authority and ministry with others.

3.) to Raise up New Leaders

Problems give us the opportunity to raise up new leaders and workers who will expand the ministry, both from within the church, and then on outward as we will see in our study of Stephen beginning this week and next week.

4.) to express our Love

Problems also give us the opportunity to express our love. The Hebrew leaders and the predominantly Hebrew members selected six men who were Hellenists and one man who was both a Gentile and a proselyte! What an illustration of Romans 12:10 and Philippians 2:1-4! When

we solve church problems, we must think of others and not of ourselves only. Problems are an opportunity to come to someone who may have felt neglected or overlooked, and show them that they are special, not only in the church, but that God sees them and cares for them greatly.

But Sadly

But sadly problems in the church don't turn into opportunities for blessings, but for attacking and divisions; as people will refuse to say how can I turn this into an opportunity to make adjustments, exercise faith, raise up in leadership, and express love, and turn it into a total heartbreak for the Lord as the Lord's heart is grieved when he watches the church pick and tear at each other. Not to mention that the world is watching. Just as the world is watching the church now, the world was watching then, and what a show they got and many saw something beautiful as they watched the church unite rather than fight, and the resultant was multiplication of church growth.

How God Works in His Church (6:1-4)

(Acts 6:1a NKJV) Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying,

Verse 1 – Context of 5:42 / Difference of Preaching and Teaching

Verse 1, tails off of the close of chapter 5, the preaching and teaching of the Word. People ask what is the difference between preaching and teaching, and I like what Pastor Don McClure said, "it is like a baby just delivered in the hospital; there's the husband passing out cigars and pointing to the child saying there's my handi-work (that's the evangelist), and there is the mother looking at the child saying to herself, now I have 18 years of work to raise this child (that's the teacher)".
(Acts 5:42 NKJV) And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

W-E-L-L Church

This church we have been reading about is well, very well because they have put such an emphasis of preaching and teaching, and the preaching and teaching naturally lead to worshipping and loving. In our studies over the last 3 months we have seen that they are a:

- **Worship Church** – as we have seen them praising and worshipping the Lord in prayer and the breaking of bread (Communion).
- **Evangelistic Church** – as we have seen them making disciples just as Jesus had commended us to.
- **Learning Church** – as they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine
- **Loving Church** – as we see them taking care of each others needs.

Needs to be Balanced / Lots of People Preached Out / To Know Him – Make Him Known

Now there needs to be a balance, I think lots of people have been preached out, and have lost a passion for the Lord; alright already, I'm saved, now tell me how to live, walk, talk, serve, love in the name of the Lord. I love the study of this Bible verse-by-verse, for I love to learn of Him. My life is, to know Him more daily, and to make Him known to others daily – to know Him and make Him known.

Notice Mathematics

Notice the mathematics in the Book of Acts. In chapter 2, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:47). Here in chapter 6, the number of the disciples was multiplied. But between the addition to the church and the multiplication of the church, there was subtraction from the church when the Lord removed Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5.

(Acts 2:47 NKJV) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Sometimes that happens to Us / Adds – Subtracts – Multiplies

Sometimes that happens to us as well (as a church and as individuals). That is, things are moving along. We're growing. We're being added to—then suddenly we're hit with a painful period of subtraction. If you're in that place today, take hope. It means good things are coming. As He did

in Acts, the Lord often subtracts right before He multiplies. Maybe things were moving nicely, wow this happened, then later this happened, my Christianity just got better everyday; but then you went (or are going through some hard times), and your walk seems dry, hard, a continual battle against the current, then hang in there my brother or sister, for I believe God's mathematics are in continual application, and these hard times that may even seem like periods of loss, are all part of your next period of not addition, but multiplication, as He pours His spiritual blessings out upon you as you never have imagined is possible for you.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV) ⁹*But as it is written:*

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) ⁹*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

(Acts 6:1b NKJV)there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

Local and Foreign Jews

The Hellenist ("Grecians") were the Greek-speaking Jews who had come to Palestine from other nations, and therefore may not have spoken Aramaic, while the "Hebrews" were Jewish residents of the land who spoke both Aramaic and Greek. The fact that the "outsiders" were being neglected created a situation that could have divided the church. However, the Apostles handled the problem with great wisdom and did not give Satan any foothold in the fellowship.

Church Recognizes this Wrong

The Church recognizes that this is wrong to have anyone looked upon as second-class; we are all equal in Christ. (Galatians 3:26-28) I think we can still see resemblances of this in the church today where some Christians consider other Christians, as "a little" lower, because they came from this background, or fell in this area of sin even though they were saved, and there is this "spiritual Ranking" that occurs in the church. Let us examine our hearts and make sure we don't allow even a glimmer of that in our lives. If you need help in that area, take your "little sin" (in comparison to their big sin) and go to the cross with it, and hold it up before His bloodied face, His bruised face beyond recognition from the beatings, hold your "little sin" before the crown of thorns (the curse) that is upon His head and ask Him, how much less is my sin, than my brothers. I think you'll think differently, for the cross is the great equalizer within the church.

Galatians 3:26-28 (NKJV) ²⁶*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

(Acts 6:2 NKJV) Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables.

(Acts 6:3 NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

(Acts 6:4 NKJV) "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Apostles Agree – but say It's not their Calling / Select godly Men

The apostles said, "The widows are in need—Hebrews and Hellenists, but our calling is not the distribution of food. Our calling is the distribution of the Word. Therefore, choose people whom you know to be good men, godly men, gifted men—and let them take care of this matter."

God intends Pastor Dedicated to Prayer & Word / To Equip the Saints

So, here we see how God intends for His Church to work, and that is that the Pastors are dedicated to two things, and that is prayer and the study of the word. The Apostles recognize their priority, for their calling is to teach and pray, so that they may equip the saints for the works of the ministry. Had they diminished the study of the word and prayer, then they would have

been diminishing the equipping of the saints. But by not doing that (from the beginning), they were already equipping saints and they were now ready to do the works of the ministry. (Ephesians 4:11 NKJV) *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,* (Ephesians 4:12 NKJV) *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*

People get fed – Grow – Mature – See Needs

This is how God intends the church to work, and that is that people get fed and grow in the Lord, and as they mature they begin to see the needs around them; they see the need in the children's church, then say how can I help; they grow and become a person of prayer and as they pray God lays it on their heart the plight of the orphans, and now they want to do something about the orphans; somebody wants to do something about the unsaved, somebody wants do something about the elderly who can't maintain their home, the elderly having to walk from their cars in the rain on a Sunday morning service; I have found that the most lasting and fruitful ministries that happen in the church are those that were born out of someone's burden, and not the pastor/church recognizing the need and figuring they need to do something about it. A person with a burden can do the work of ten people who simply think it's a good idea. So God says this is how the church is to work, and when the church applies it, "church works".

Oftentimes – What you Going to Do Pastor

Oftentimes people have said to me, "What are you going to do about this situation, Pastor? You're the pastor. Murmur, murmur, murmur." More often than not, I have replied, "What are you going to do about it? That's the issue. Don't look to the professionals. If you're aware of the problem, it could be that you've been called to be part of the solution. The reason you feel the burden, the reason you're aware of the situation is because God is calling you." God takes the opportunities of problems, to arise the opportunity of someone else to step-up, step-out, and get engaged beyond watching, and into action, into leadership. For that person, it is now decision time – what are you going to do about it!

One type Neglect shouldn't replace Another

Let me note here, feeding these widows was important, very important, but it is important to realize in our lives personally as individuals or as a church, one type of neglect should not replace the neglect of another. We can never replace the temporary with the long-term (even as important as the temporary is, such as we see here). I have found that really the majority of time in my life that it seems that the things that are pressing are rarely important, and the things that are important are rarely pressings. The disciples here are faced with a challenge here, and they face it quite masterfully and with much wisdom, for at this moment in the church they could have gotten themselves distracted by making this their priority, and it would be rather easy to think it would be the best thing to do, and that is we must get involved personally in order to assure and maintain the peace and unity in the church. But the disciples know their priority, they know their calling, and that is to be men of the word and prayer, and we need to keep that balance personally for their will always be needs, but we need to meet the needs after our spiritual needs are met first. Christian, you will be able to accomplish 10 times more materially, after taking care of the spiritual first. One type of neglect should not replace the neglect of another, take care of the spiritual things first, and the materially things will be easier to take care of:

Matthew 6:31-34 (NKJV) ³¹*"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'* ³²*For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*

Who God Uses in His Church (6:5-7)

Now that we see how God wants His church to work, with the emphasis on teaching and prayer, now we see who God uses in His church.

(Acts 6:5 NKJV) And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch,

Grecian Names

These 7 men have Grecian names, not Hebrews; I think that is a great show of love by the people that the ones picked were Grecians themselves and thus the Grecians widows will get treated properly.

Stephen - would become the first martyr. He was a powerful Bible expositor, as we will see in chapter 7. He stood fast for the faith!

...and Philip - Philip went on to become a great evangelist, but more powerful than that was that he had four daughters who became prophetesses, and were virgins, he was a godly man who increased the boundaries of ministry.

...and Prochorus - Church history tells us that Prochorus would later become the secretary, or the assistant, to the apostle John. Following John's death, Prochorus became the bishop of Nicodema—a large and growing church—before being martyred himself.

...and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch. - Many Bible scholars believe that, after serving faithfully for a season as a deacon, Nicolas started a sect known as the Nicolaitans, mentioned in Revelation 2 and 3, which was the practice of shepherding where a person can't do anything without asking the pastors and leaders of the church. .

Be Careful about being Overbearing / Seek not Dominion – but Joy

Now the life of Nicolas is speculation, not Biblical text, but it is still worthy to say be careful about being overbearing in ministry, telling people what they ought to do and getting into every detail of a person's business. That needs to be our hearts in the ministry, I come to help you have joy because I love you and want you to do well. Paul said, – we do not seek to have dominion over you, but helpers of your joy; now that is the ministry. Should anyone in this church be in sin, and I come to you to discuss it, it is not because I want to come down on you, am out to scold you, but I come because I want you to do well, I want to help you do well, for when you do well you'll have joy. When you don't do well (if you are saved) you won't have joy, you'll be miserable, and I come so that you might do well and have joy.

2 Corinthians 1:24 (NKJV) ²⁴*Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.*

True Ministry – Coming Alongside – Girding – To have Joy / Husbands & Wives?

The true ministry is when we come alongside others, under girding their arms, helping them to have the joy of the Lord and to fall more in love with Jesus Christ, and by leading people past our arms into His arms, for His outreached arms the place of love and comfort. Husbands do you do that for your wives, wives for your husbands, is that on the forefront of your mind in your home, how can I bring joy unto my spouse, my children? Christian do you come to the church and have in the forefront of your mind, how can I bless that brother or sister over there, how can I bring the joy of the Lord into their life, how can I take them, bring them, closer to the Lord? Rather than be asking what can you do for me. I love my friend Mark down in Florida, every time (every time) he answers the phone he says, “this is Mark, how may I bless you”.

1 Thessalonians 3:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹*For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, ¹⁰night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?*

Man in doctors Office

Husbands, wives, imagine a marriage that seeks one thing, “how may I bless you”. Reminds me of the story of a man went to the doctor after weeks of symptoms. The doctor examined him carefully, then called the patient's wife into his office. “Your husband is suffering from a rare form of anemia. Without treatment, he'll be dead in two weeks. The good news is, it can be treated with proper nutrition.” “You will need to get up early every morning and fix your husband a hot breakfast—pancakes, bacon and eggs, the works. He'll need a home-cooked lunch every day,

and then an old-fashioned meat-and-potato dinner every evening. It would be especially helpful if you could bake frequently. Cakes, pies, homemade bread—these are the things that will allow your husband to live. “One more thing. His immune system is weak, so it’s important that your home be kept spotless at all times. You’ll have to keep the stress down on him, so be very kind to him, rub his feet at night, make him fresh lemonade and bring it to him as he watches television, and just keep telling him how much you love him. Do you have any questions the doctor asked?” The wife had none. “Do you want to break the news, or shall I?” asked the doctor. “I will,” the wife replied. She walked into the exam room. The husband, sensing the seriousness of his illness, asked her, “It’s bad, isn’t it?” She nodded, tears welling up in her eyes. “What’s going to happen to me?” he asked. With a sob, the wife blurted out, “The doctor says you’re gonna die in two weeks!”

The 7 were Filled / More to do Dishes than Speak Tongues / Filled to Wait Tables / Control

Note this text here, mark it and etch it into you mind, these seven were “full” of the Holy Spirit (which filled simply means to be controlled) and thus we see the need of the Holy Spirit to wait on tables. As I have said it takes more Holy Spirit to do the dishes than it does to speak in tongues. More than the Billy Graham’s of this world need to be filled with the Holy Spirit, husbands need to be filled, wives, Sunday school workers, out teenagers on the high school campuses, every born again believer needs to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled, look here at what the Scripture is saying, to wait on tables. You need the Holy Spirit to do the dishes, to clear the table, to take out the trash; you need the Holy Spirit to serve you spouse, to serve your brother and sisters.

(Acts 6:3 NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

The 7 Commonly called Deacons / Deacon – Servant / Synonymous / To be Controlled

We commonly call these seven men of Acts 6 “deacons” because the Greek noun diakonos is used in Acts 6:1 (“ministration”), and the verb diakoneo (“serve”) is used in Acts 6:2. However, this title is not given to them in this chapter, although you find deacons mentioned in Philippians 1:1 and their qualifications given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The word simply means “a servant.” These seven men were humble servants of the church, men whose work made it possible for the Apostles to carry on their important ministries among the people. We know from past studies that the word “servant” in our English New Testament usually represents the Greek word “doulos” which we most often associate with a (bondslave). Sometimes it means diakonos (deacon or minister); this is strictly accurate, for doulos and diakonos are synonyms. Both words denote:

- *a man who is not at his own disposal,*
- *but is his master's purchased property,*
- *bought to serve his master's needs,*
- *to be at his beck and call every moment,*
- *the slave's sole business is to do as he is told.*

Christian service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave relationship to one’s Savior. These men were filled with the Holy Spirit (controlled by the Holy Spirit). For them and for us it is saying, “Lord I lay down my wants and desires, and allow you to make me a servant, and use me as a servant, to flow and move through me, so that I may bring joy into the lives of others that you put in my life”. That is what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit!

Church Sign – Servants Entrance

There was an old church I read about that has sign that hangs over the only door into the sanctuary: SERVANT’S ENTRANCE. There isn’t any way in or out of that church except through the service door.

(Acts 6:6 NKJV) whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

(Acts 6:7 NKJV) Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Secret to Growth

This verse should be starred, circled, underlined, and highlighted by everyone involved in ministry. The secret to church growth and ministry expansion is simply to feed the flock. Healthy sheep reproduce. It's inevitable.

8,000 Priest / Imagine what they Saw on Good Friday

Josephus says that there were 8,000 priests serving in the Temple, so what is the number that were saved? Any priest walking into the temple on the first Good Friday, seeing the veil rent from top to bottom, would have known something miraculous had taken place. After all, it would have been unthinkable for any man to tear the veil. Everyone knew the penalty for entering the Holy of Holies unworthily was death. It also would have been impossible for any man to tear the veil. Sixty feet wide, thirty feet high, and ten inches thick, the veil was so massive it required a company of priests to hang it. No wonder a great number of priests—some seeing the torn veil, others hearing about it and watching what was happening in Jerusalem—were converted.

Multiplication And Addition

In 2 Timothy 2:1-2, the Apostle Paul challenges Timothy to raise up disciples who can further the gospel: You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. Imagine, for example, an evangelist winning one thousand people to Christ every day, working 365 days a year with no time off. In thirty years of ministry, he will have added over ten million people to the Kingdom of God. Now imagine a Christian like you, who is capable of winning one person a year to Christ. You spend your year discipling this lone convert to the point where he can go and disciple another. He then spends his next year winning and discipling another. In the meantime, you are also discipling another, and so the process goes. If this were to go on unbroken, it would only take nineteen years to win 10 million people to Christ – all because your initial willingness and involvement. We can see that if the world is going to be evangelized, then we must use principles of multiplication, not just addition. We can make a major impact on the world around. After I lead someone to the Lord, I tell them to go tell someone. This does two things, it makes their profession real to them, and it passes on the gospel to another.

2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) 2And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.

Outline: "Church Works":

- How God Works in His Church (6:1-4)
- Who God Uses in His Church (6:5-8)

Once Upon a Time

Once upon a time a woman in tattered clothes and her sad-looking little boy stood on a big city street corner begging for food, or money to buy food. It so happened that among the passersby was a wealthy man who looked, but neither spoke nor offered any help. But when he arrived at his palatial home and looked upon his dinner table laden with the finest foods, he began to think about the poor little waif and his distressed mother. And the more he thought about that situation, the angrier he became at God. Then he clenched his fist and shook it in what he thought to be in God's direction. "How can You allow such misery?" he cried out. "Why don't You do something to help those unfortunate people?" And, somewhere, deep within himself, came God's answer: "I did. I created you."

Stephen is Martyred (6:8 – 7:60)

Part 1 (6:8 – 7:16)

Last Study Church Growing – Problems / 7 Men Selected to Wait Tables / A Servant

Last study we saw that the church was growing, with the growth brought problems of trying to meet everyone's needs (specifically the widow's physical needs being taken care) and the solution to meet the problem was that the apostles rise up 7 men who were to "wait on tables" and see that all the people were treated equally. We took an in-depth look at what it meant to be a servant of Jesus Christ, and we summed-up what a servant/slave of Jesus Christ was to be:

- *a man who is not at his own disposal,*
- *but is his master's purchased property,*
- *bought to serve his master's needs,*
- *to be at his beck and call every moment,*
- *the slave's sole business is to do as he is told by his Master.*

A Life focused bringing Joy to Others / Marriages – How did you Do

We also talked about living a life that was focused on bringing joy (the joy of the Lord) into all the people that we come in contact with. We specifically made the challenge of what our marriages would be like, our family relationships would be like, if we put on the forefronts of our minds every morning when we began the day, this question, how can I bring joy into my spouses life, how can I think about them in such a way that I continually consider their needs over mine, and that I may lead them and draw them closer to Christ. Parents did you do that for you kids, kids did you do that for you parents? So Christian, how did you do this week? Can you think of anything specifically that you did to fulfill that? If you can't, good news, you got all week to try again. If you did, how did it affect your marriage, your family, you personally? I already know the answer, it's wonderful isn't it?

2 Corinthians 1:24 (NKJV) ²⁴*Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.*

Pick Up with Stephen

Well we pick up here in verse 8, as Stephen, one of the seven, becomes center of attention.

Stephen Accused of Blasphemy

(Acts 6:8 NKJV) **And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.**

From Waiting on Tables – To Signs and Wonders / Preaching in Power

Now we see Stephen going from waiting on tables to do signs and wonders, and then we will see Him preaching the Word in power and boldness.

Matt 25 – Faithful in Little Things / Don't Despise Small Things / Never too Small

In Matthew 25:21, Jesus taught that those who are faithful in little things will be made rulers over greater things. If we desire to be used by the Lord, we must be faithful in whatever God gives us to do in the beginning days of our ministry. Although Scripture tells us not to despise the days of small things (Zechariah 4:10), yet many people find themselves reluctant to do the seemingly insignificant tasks. Desirous of something grander, they feel menial service is beneath them. But the way of the Lord is that we first prove ourselves in smaller things and, as we are faithful in them, He will give us greater responsibility. We can never be too small for God to use, but a man can be too big for God to use, in those that think themselves too highly to do the small and menial tasks.

Mat 25:21 (NKJV) *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

Reward for Faithfulness – Greater Service / Happiness found in Losing Life

The reward for faithfulness in service is greater service. Jesus came on the scene and said something radical when He said, “Happiness is found in losing your life, in giving yourself away. Happiness is found in serving, not in being served; in giving, not in getting” (see Matthew 10:39). Today if you’re feeling somewhat blue, perhaps it’s because you’re not engaging yourself in serving others. When you feel like throwing in the towel, take up the towel instead. Wash someone’s feet and suddenly you’ll be refreshed.

Mat 10:39 (NKJV) *“He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.*

Stephen is the Model / Not Glorious Position / 2 Verses Later – Tables to Miracles

Stephen modeled this beautifully. He began by serving tables, helping feed widows—not necessarily a glorious position, not an exalted ministry. But because he was faithful, he was then elected to the office of deacon (Acts 6:3-5)—one of seven men chosen by the early church as being a man full of the Holy Ghost, full of wisdom, and full of good works. Here, two verses later, we see him doing “great wonders and miracles among the people.” Stephen went from being a table server to a deacon to a miracle-worker because he was faithful at each step.

Act 6:3 (NKJV) *“Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;*

Desiring More Boldness / Start waiting on Tables

Do you ever find yourself wishing that you had more boldness in the things of the Lord, do you ever say I wish I had the boldness of those people in the Bible? Well Paul told Timothy that those that use the office of the deacon (servant as we saw last week), purchase for themselves a great degree of boldness in ministry. So if you want boldness, start waiting on tables in the church.

1 Timothy 3:13 (NKJV) *For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

(Acts 6:9 NKJV) Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.

(Acts 6:10 NKJV) And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke.

Talmud – 480 Synagogues / Stephen Outgunned Them / They hired Liars

The Talmud says that there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem in this period of history. Somehow Stephen ends up at some of these synagogues sharing the word. These who came against Stephen and argued with Stephen were outgunned by Stephen. They couldn’t beat his logic. They couldn’t resist his reasoning. They couldn’t withstand his persuasive speech. So what did they do? They hired liars who said, “We’ve heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

1 Timothy 3:13 (NKJV) *For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

(Acts 6:11 NKJV) Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.”

(Acts 6:12 NKJV) And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

(Acts 6:13 NKJV) They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law;

(Acts 6:14 NKJV) “for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”

(Acts 6:15 NKJV) And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

Can’t compete against his Wisdom / Make up Stories / Your probably right – Try Destroy

So they can’t compete with Stephen’s wisdom, so they have to resort to making stories up about him. Stephen is in good company for they are doing to Him the same they had to do with Jesus.

Precious people you know you are in the right once people have to resort to trying to destroy your character. If you are ever wondering when you are faced with oppositions (from saved or unsaved), a good sign that what you said and what you are doing is on the right path is, is that they have to resort to trying to destroy your character.

3 Things Accused Of / Temple – Law - Moses

They accuse Stephen of 3 things here, and Stephen will soundly refute their accusation in his sermon in chapter 7. They accuse him of blaspheming the Temple (same thing they accused Jesus of), secondly they accused him of blasphemy the Law, and thirdly of blasphemy of Moses and the customs Moses delivered to Israel.

As False Accusations Came – Stephen didn't Reflect hatred – but Heaven

As false accusations, lies, and anger preceded the rocks that would soon follow, Stephen's face reflected neither hatred nor horror, but heaven. Stephen is preaching on heaven, and his face showed it; addressing his students concerning ministry, C. H. Spurgeon said, "Men, when you teach on heaven, let there always be a glow on your face, a gleam in your eye, and a smile on your lips. When you teach on hell, your normal face will do fine."

Want to bring Heaven into Home – Put on the Glow of heaven / How - Steadfast

Do you want to bring a little heaven into your home, your marriage, your parenting, your witnessing, put on the glow of heaven. How? Through "steadfastness", just as we see Stephen here in verse 15, as they looked upon Stephen steadfastly, they saw the glow of heaven, because Stephen we see was a man of faith, the Word, he heeded Acts 2:42 and it shown: *(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

The glow comes as we remain steadfast, as we see Luke use this word in 3 other places – it unlocks the power of this word in application to our lives.

1.. Steadfast Because of the Spending Time with God

Here in Acts 6, Stephen was about to be stoned. After the elders had challenged him and were ready to sentence him to death, "All that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). How can you, like Stephen, have the face of an angel? Ask Moses....Moses was in the presence of God for forty days on the mountain. So blessed was he, so full and satisfied, he forgot to eat (Exodus 34:28). And when he came down, his face glowed. Steadfastly spend time with God, and like Moses and Stephen, your face will glow with the peace and joy of His presence.

Act 6:15 (KJV) And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Exd 34:28 (NKJV) So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.

Exd 34:29 (NKJV) Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him.

2.. Steadfast Because of the Place We're Going

In Acts 7, we will read that before Stephen died, "He, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:55). Stephen saw heaven, and that was all that mattered. Gang, in heaven it won't matter how shiny my car was or how many hobbies I had. The only thing that will matter will be what I did for Christ. Therefore, I am a fool of immense proportion if I prioritize anything but the kingdom. The key to life is to live life backwards, from heaven to today, and all things will be in their proper perspective, and we will have peace, and that peace of God will produce a glow upon our face.

Act 7:55 ((KJV) But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Balmy Day Badger Stadium Wisconsin / MSU Spartans / 70 miles Away

On a balmy October afternoon in 1982, Badger Stadium in Madison, Wisconsin, was packed. More than 60,000 die-hard University of Wisconsin supporters were watching their football team take on the Michigan State Spartans. It soon became obvious that MSU had the better team. What seemed odd, however, as the score became more lopsided, were the bursts of applause and shouts of joy from the Wisconsin fans. How could they cheer when their team was losing? It turns out that seventy miles away the Milwaukee Brewers were beating the St. Louis Cardinals in game three of the 1982 World Series. Many of the fans in the stands were listening to portable radios--and responding to something other than their immediate circumstances. Paul encourages us to fix our eyes not on what is seen but what is unseen (2 Corinthians 4:18). When we do, we can rejoice even in hardships because we see Christ's larger victory.

2 Cor 4:17 (NKJV) *For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*

2 Cor 4:18 (NKJV) *while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

3.. Steadfast Because of the Price that Was Paid

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Jesus set His face steadfastly to die with me on His mind. What if Jesus had done what I so often do? If He had said, "I think I'm going to Jerusalem," or "I'd like to go to Jerusalem," or "I hope to go to Jerusalem," I would perish to hell. Instead, Jesus said, "I have a job to do, and nothing is going to stop Me. I steadfastly set My face to Jerusalem"—and our salvation was the result. The price was paid, and we can relax that our salvation is secure, and we need not strive or struggle to add to it. It is Done!

Luke 9:51 (KJV) *And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,*

May the Lord keep our lives and ministry simple as we steadfastly continue in the Word, Communion, fellowship, and prayer.

Chapter 7

Stephen's Sermon – The Call of Abraham

(Acts 7:1 NKJV) Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

High Priest Opens door for Response / The 3 Accusations / Synonymous with Word

The High Priest now opens the door for Stephen to respond against the 3 accusations, that he has spoken against Moses, spoken against the Law, and has spoken against the Temple. Take note of that because he will tear down all three of these accusations. Also, Stephen gives a wonderful overview of Jewish history, the Old Testament, and clearly shows he was a man of the word. I think it obvious to see that a man of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit is synonymous with a man or woman who has a great handle on the Word of God.

Act 6:3 (NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

(Acts 7:2 NKJV) And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,

(Acts 7:3 NKJV) "and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'

(Acts 7:4 NKJV) "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.

(Acts 7:5 NKJV) "And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

(Acts 7:6 NKJV) "But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years.

(Acts 7:7 NKJV) 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.'

(Acts 7:8 NKJV) "Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

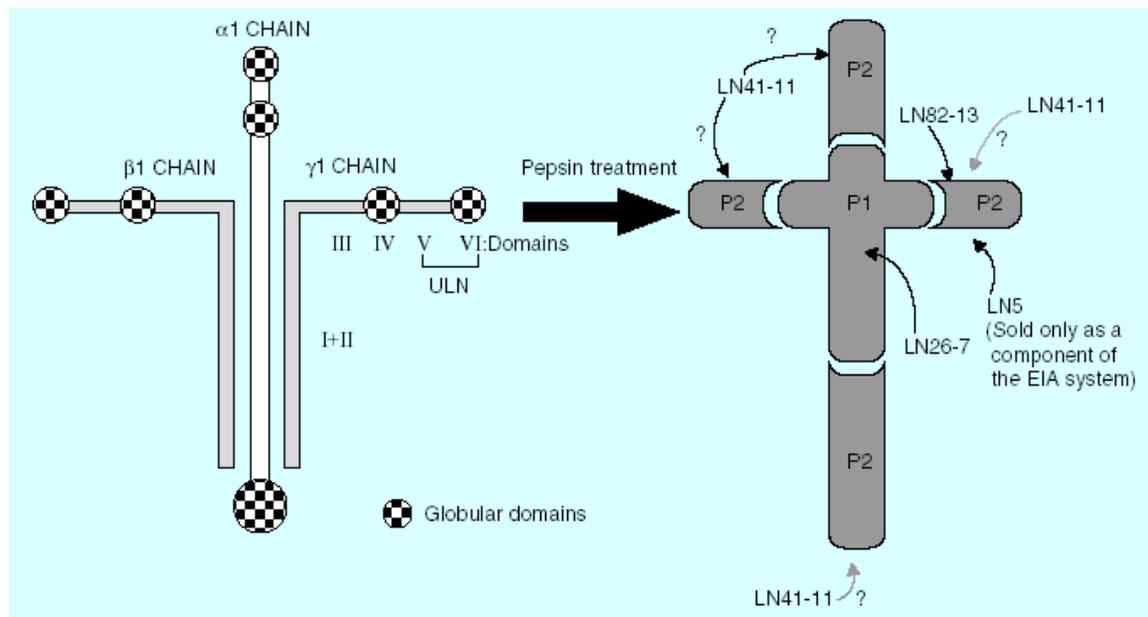
Lineage of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob / Back to Beginning – All by Faith

Stephen here is laying out the foundation of the Jewish people, the lineage of all the people; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Stephen is an excellent Bible expositor, and he takes them back to the beginning, to remind them that all the promises are by faith; by faith Abraham believed God that the land would be to his children, by faith Abraham believed circumcision as a sign/covenant between him and the Lord. Stephen is establishing that we receive God's word by faith, and that these religious leaders are no longer walking by faith, but by their own customs and traditions, and that they have forgotten the promise of the Messiah that was given to the forefathers, and that Jesus clearly fulfilled all these promises.

- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 12:3 Matthew 1:1*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 17:19 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 18:17-18a Matthew 1:1*
- *The Messiah would come for all nations. Genesis 18:17-18b Acts 3:24-26*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 21:12 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be sacrificed upon the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 Luke 23:33*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 22:18a Galatians 3:16*
- *The Messiah would come for all nations. Genesis 22:18b Galatians 3:14*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 26:4 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob. Genesis 28:14a Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would come for all people. Genesis 28:14b Galatians 3:26-29*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Judah. Genesis 49:10a Luke 3:23-33*
- *The Messiah would be a King Genesis 49:10b John 1:49*
- *The Jew's authority to administer capitol punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c John 18:31*

God Weaves His Love Story through the Universe / Life through the Cross / Laminin

Just a side note, love to look into these type of things, and that is the building block of all life is the cross. The cross is the center of the universe, all the history of man from Adam and Eve flowed to the cross, and all the history of mankind up to this very moment flows from the cross. The cross determines the destiny of eternal life. The cross is the building block of human life, no cross as your foundation, then there is no life. God weaves His message of life all through the universe, we see Him in the Creation around us, we see Him in this Bible, and He continual weaves and tells His story of love for man in all kinds of places; one of those places is in medical science. Now medical science can add years to your life, but only God can add life to your years. I am amazed at the love message God sends us through medical science, and that is in the protein called "Laminin", which medical scientist call the basement molecule, the scaffolding protein, in that they say it is the base, the foundation that all living proteins are built off of. The starting point of living protein, starts at the Laminin, and builds from there. Open up any medical journal, medical text book, and you will see that the structure of that molecule forms a perfect cross. God has woven in before time began, I will even weave in my love story of the cross to mankind, at the very foundation of all life, they will see the cross – for all life flows through the cross. You can't have life without the cross.



[Stephen's Sermon – The Patriachs in Egypt](#)

(Acts 7:9 NKJV) "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him

(Acts 7:10 NKJV) "and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

(Acts 7:11 NKJV) "Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance.

(Acts 7:12 NKJV) "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

(Acts 7:13 NKJV) "And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh.

(Acts 7:14 NKJV) "Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.

(Acts 7:15 NKJV) "So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.

(Acts 7:16 NKJV) "And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

Stephen recaps story of Joseph – Famine in Egypt / Brothers didn't Recognize Him

During a time of famine, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt for help. They stood before the Prime Minister of Egypt, not recognizing him to be their own brother. As Joseph began to question them when they appeared before him a second time, they admitted that they had sinned greatly against their brother. Then, in that powerful emotional scene, Joseph said, "I am Joseph" (Genesis 45:4). It wasn't until the second time they saw him that Joseph's brothers realized who he was. So, too, after going through a time of famine, drought, and tribulation, Israel will finally recognize Jesus in His Second Coming

Gen 45:4 (NKJV) And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt.

Rom 11:26 (NKJV) And so all Israel will be saved as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;

Stephen makes point – They didn't Recognize Joseph – You missed the Messiah

But here in our scene today, Stephen is making the point to these religious leaders, just as Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him, you didn't recognize your Messiah.

Maybe you have Too

These religious leaders didn't recognize Jesus, and all that He was, and maybe that could even be you today. Maybe Jesus has been revealing Himself to you over and over, showing His love and hope for you, but you have continually missed Him because you have been distracted by other things, maybe a religious system, maybe a custom, a family tradition – May you see the Savior today, may you see through all those things and receive Him into your life for the forgiveness of sin, the promise of eternal life, and the help of living life today. Medical science may be able to add years to your life, but only Jesus can add life to your years. May for some today, you recognize Him as Savior, but you missed Him this week as He knocked on the door to fellowship with you before work, maybe you missed Him as He sat on the park bench all alone waiting for someone to give Him a cold drink. Maybe you missed Him as His voice said go therefore, call that person and comfort them, go stand beside that brother that is going through a storm.

Stephen is Martyred (6:8 – 7:60)

Part 2 (7:1 - 37)

Vacation / Heaven will not Disappoint

Well just got back from vacation; probably like yours I had been looking forward to it all year, looking forward to it since last years vacation. Looking forward to relaxing on the beach, sleeping long and late, watching some movies, going for walks with my bride, playing games with my children, and of course eating good. Like you I'm sure, I was going 100 mph the week leading up to vacation, I worked four ten hour shifts so I could get an extra day off, I was doing all kinds of things around the house (cutting grass, paying bills, sending emails, etc – and packing of course) to prepare for being away for 10 days. So when vacation came, I was exhausted. Well when we got to the beach, unloaded, ready to relax and be refreshed, the baby would not sleep. Our 2 year old can only sleep in his own crib, if he falls asleep anywhere else, say his car seat, his baby seat on the bicycle, it will only be for 10 minutes and then he will be up for hours. We had days at the beach where he would be up almost 20 hours (a 2 year old if you can imagine that). We try to put him down in his pack-n-play, and he would climb out and coming running back out into the living room – sometimes it would take 3 hours to get him to finally go to sleep. My vacation was anything but relaxing and refreshing (but still had many great family memories). At the end of vacation I was extremely exhausted, and then had to start work all over again bright and early Monday morning. So my vacation was somewhat disappointing, and certainly didn't live up to my expectations. Well I say all that to say this, heaven will not disappoint, heaven will be more than we expected and anticipated; for eye has not seen nor ear heard all the things God has prepared for us – so let us not grow weary of doing good, let us not waver in these final laps as our race draws near the finish, for soon and very soon we are going to see the King!

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV) ⁹*But as it is written:*

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) ⁹*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

Study – See a man Finishing Strong / Part 2 – Stephen Martyred / From Tables to Preach

In our study today we will see a man who finished strong, who did not grow weary of doing good, and was not disappointed – for he got to see the Lord standing at the right hand of God. We are in part 2 of our two part study of Stephen being martyred. To recap, Stephen has gone from waiting on tables, to preaching before the Religious Leaders in the synagogue. We see the fulfillment of what Jesus said in Matthew 25:21.

Mat 25:21 (NKJV) *"His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

Man never too Small – but can be too Big

As we had said, a man will never be too small for God to use, only too big – in that they can think they are above the small things and the menial things.

3 Things Accused Of / Temple – Law - Moses

Back in chapter we read how they accused Stephen of 3 things here, and here in chapter 7 we will see Stephen soundly refute their accusation:

- They accuse him of blaspheming the Temple (same thing they accused Jesus of),
- secondly the accused him of blasphemy the Law,
- and thirdly of blasphemy of Moses and the customs Moses delivered to Israel.

Stephen Soundly Defeats Accusations / Defeats with Word / Preach only what Taught

We will see Stephen soundly defeat all their accusations. Stephen defeats them by giving them the Word of God. Some call this passage preaching, and that it is; but it is one of the riches teachings in all the Bible on Old Testament History. You see you cannot preach except what you

have learned and been taught. Teaching always precedes the preaching. If someone is preaching apart from what they have been taught, then they are basically just babbling. Stephen is preaching and teaching at the same time; and as people are taught, the preaching becomes real. Unfortunately for these hearers, it became so real that it pierced their hearts and they couldn't take the truth and had to silence the messenger.

1 Peter 3:13-15 (NKJV) ¹³And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? ¹⁴But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled."¹⁵But sanctify ¹⁶the Lord God in your hearts, **and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you** a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Side Note on Teaching

On a side-note, I am reminded back in 2 Chronicles, that when God brought revival upon the land of Judah (through King Jehoshaphat), He did it by giving the land and the people teachers. I am blessed when asked by other pastor's who fills in for you when you go away? I tell them I am blessed in that I don't have a long list, but a wide list. I don't have a list that I go down, and it is in the order of ranking (whose the best teacher, then second-best), but rather I have a wide list – as so many are equally gifted teachers that I need only go across and find who is available at that time. I've been asked, why don't you announce when you are going away, and I say what for, whoever comes to hear the Word, will hear the Word, regardless of who is standing at the pulpit. Hey Beloved, I am greatly encouraged because when God wanted to bless and revive a land, He gave them teachers – therefore I know God isn't done with Anne Arundel County, nor the United States.

2 Chronicles 17:7-9 (KJV) ⁷Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, even to Benhail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. ⁸And with them he sent Levites, even Shemaiah, and Nathaniah, and Zebadiah, and Asahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tobadonijah, Levites; and with them Elishama and Jehoram, priests. ⁹And they taught in Judah, and had the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

Stephen – Preaching based on what has Learned

So, picking back up in our study on the stoning of Stephen, a man of God preaching the Word based on what he has learned from the Word.

Recap - Stephen's Sermon – The Call of Abraham (1-8)

(Acts 7:1 NKJV) Then the high priest said, "Are these things so?"

High Priest Opens door for Response / The 3 Accusations / Synonymous with Word

The High Priest now opens the door for Stephen to respond against the 3 accusations, that he has spoken against Moses, spoken against the Law, and has spoken against the Temple. Take note of that because he will tear down all three of these accusations. Also, Stephen gives a wonderful overview of Jewish history, the Old Testament, and clearly shows he was a man of the word. I think it obvious to see that a man of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit is synonymous with a man or woman who has a great handle on the Word of God.

Act 6:3 (NKJV) "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

(Acts 7:2 NKJV) And he said, "Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran,

(Acts 7:3 NKJV) "and said to him, 'Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.'

(Acts 7:4 NKJV) "Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell.

(Acts 7:5 NKJV) "And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him.

(Acts 7:6 NKJV) "But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years.

(Acts 7:7 NKJV) 'And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,' said God, 'and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.'

(Acts 7:8 NKJV) "Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

Lineage of Abraham-Isaac-Jacob / Back to Beginning – All by Faith

Stephen here is laying out the foundation of the Jewish people, the lineage of all the people; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Stephen is an excellent Bible expositor, and he takes them back to the beginning, to remind them that all the promises are by faith; by faith Abraham believed God that the land would be to his children, by faith Abraham believed circumcision as a sign/covenant between him and the Lord. Stephen is establishing that we receive God's word by faith, and that these religious leaders are no longer walking by faith, but by their own customs and traditions, and that they have forgotten the promise of the Messiah that was given to the forefathers, and that Jesus clearly fulfilled all these promises.

- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 12:3 Matthew 1:1*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 17:19 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 18:17-18a Matthew 1:1*
- *The Messiah would come for all nations. Genesis 18:17-18b Acts 3:24-26*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 21:12 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be sacrificed upon the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 Luke 23:33*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham. Genesis 22:18a Galatians 3:16*
- *The Messiah would come for all nations. Genesis 22:18b Galatians 3:14*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac. Genesis 26:4 Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Jacob. Genesis 28:14a Luke 3:23-34*
- *The Messiah would come for all people. Genesis 28:14b Galatians 3:26-29*
- *The Messiah would be a descendant of Judah. Genesis 49:10a Luke 3:23-33*
- *The Messiah would be a King Genesis 49:10b John 1:49*
- *The Jew's authority to administer capitol punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c John 18:31*

God Weaves His Love Story through the Universe / Life through the Cross / Laminin

Just a side note, love to look into these type of things, and that is the building block of all life is the cross. The cross is the center of the universe, all the history of man from Adam and Eve flowed to the cross, and all the history of mankind up to this very moment flows from the cross. The cross determines the destiny of eternal life. The cross is the building block of human life, no cross as your foundation, then there is no life. God weaves His message of life all through the universe, we see Him in the Creation around us, we see Him in this Bible, and He continual weaves and tells His story of love for man in all kinds of places; one of those places is in medical science. Now medical science can add years to your life, but only God can add life to your years. I am amazed at the love message God sends us through medical science, and that is in the protein called "Laminin", which medical scientist call the basement molecule, the scaffolding protein, in that they say it is the base, the foundation that all living proteins are built off of. The starting point of living protein, starts at the Laminin, and builds from there. Open up any medical journal, medical text book, and you will see that the structure of that molecule forms a perfect cross (see Picture above).. God has woven in before time began, I will even weave in my love story of the cross to mankind, at the very foundation of all life, they will see the cross – for all life flows through the cross. You can't have life without the cross

Stephen's Sermon – The Patriarchs in Egypt (9-16)

(Acts 7:9 NKJV) "And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him

(Acts 7:10 NKJV) "and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house.

(Acts 7:11 NKJV) "Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance.

(Acts 7:12 NKJV) "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first.

(Acts 7:13 NKJV) "And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh.

(Acts 7:14 NKJV) "Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people.

(Acts 7:15 NKJV) "So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers.

(Acts 7:16 NKJV) "And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

Stephen recaps story of Joseph – Famine in Egypt / Brothers didn't Recognize Him

During a time of famine, Joseph's brothers went to Egypt for help. They stood before the Prime Minister of Egypt, not recognizing him to be their own brother. As Joseph began to question them when they appeared before him a second time, they admitted that they had sinned greatly against their brother. Then, in that powerful emotional scene, Joseph said, "I am Joseph" (Genesis 45:4). It wasn't until the second time they saw him that Joseph's brothers realized who he was. So, too, after going through a time of famine, drought, and tribulation, Israel will finally recognize Jesus in His Second Coming

Gen 45:4 (NKJV) *And Joseph said to his brothers, "Please come near to me." So they came near. Then he said: "I am Joseph your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."*

Rom 11:26 (NKJV) *And so all Israel will be saved as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;"*

Stephen makes point – They didn't Recognize Joseph – You missed the Messiah

But here in our scene today, Stephen is making the point to these religious leaders, just as Joseph's brothers didn't recognize him, you didn't recognize your Messiah.

Maybe you have Too

These religious leaders didn't recognize Jesus, and all that He was, and maybe that could even be you today. Maybe Jesus has been revealing Himself to you over and over, showing His love and hope for you, but you have continually missed Him because you have been distracted by other things, maybe a religious system, maybe a custom, a family tradition – May you see the Savior today, may you see through all those things and receive Him into your life for the forgiveness of sin, the promise of eternal life, and the help of living life today. Medical science may be able to add years to your life, but only Jesus can add life to your years. May for some today, you recognize Him as Savior, but you missed Him this week as He knocked on the door to fellowship with you before work, maybe you missed Him as He sat on the park bench all alone waiting for someone to give Him a cold drink. Maybe you missed Him as His voice said go therefore, call that person and comfort them, go stand beside that brother that is going through a storm.

Carry Your Tracts / Don't Miss Opportunities

Can I encourage you to always have a tract on ya or nearby. Keep them in your car, keep them in your purse you gals, keep them near so you never miss an opportunity (for as you see them, they will continually remind you of the Great Commission, and the multitude of opportunities before you every day. We will try to keep a cache of them, just ask and we will give ya some. But maybe you have your own flavor of tracts, if so go check out the American Tract Society (<http://www.atstracts.org/>). Or check out Ray Comfort's site, (<http://www.wayofthemaster.com>) to get tracts there. Use them as business cards by giving them to the person at 7/11 or the gas station and say to them, here is my number, if there is anything you'd like to talk about concerning the things of the Lord, give me a call. Now you've just done two things, you have made a connection to a person that you actually care about them, and secondly you have just given them a tract that contains the words for how to have eternal life. The opportunities are before us, may we have eyes to recognize them.

Stephen's Sermon – God delivers Israel by Moses

(Acts 7:17 NKJV) "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt

(Acts 7:18 NKJV) "till another king arose who did not know Joseph.

(Acts 7:19 NKJV) "This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live.

Israel grew from 75 to 2 million+ / Pharaoh tries kill Babies / Incubator

As the nation of Israel multiplied and grew—not in Israel, but in Egypt—Pharaoh saw their number grow from seventy-five to two million. Fearing a rebellion, he sought to reduce their population by ordering the destruction of all Jewish baby boys. His destruction plans didn't work as the children of Israel grew from 75 to 2 million plus. Oh slavery, how could you allow such a thing God? Why would you let them spend 400 years as slaves? I will tell you why, because Egypt was God's incubator as He grew a Nation from 75 to 2 million plus. Outside of Egypt were ruthless people and nations, and they would have seen the riches and blessings of Jacob and his small family and they would have come in to kill and rob them (but they were safe within Egypt who had the greatest military army on the face of the planet at that time). God had a plan for these people, and that plan was to make them a great Nation that one day would claim the Promise land, but God first had to make them mighty enough to take the land. God grew and forged a nation of steel in the hot fires of Egypt, so that when the "time of the promise" came, they were forged in steel, strong and mighty for the battles that were to come. These slaves weren't weak from having people wait on them, they were steeled strong from carrying brick and enduring the sun – they were now ready. Egypt was God's incubator to birth the great Nation.

Maybe You Fiery Trial / God is Forging a Nation in You / Hardened Steel

Maybe you are in some fiery trials right now, let me tell you, embrace them full-on because I believe God is forging a nation in you, He is turning you into steel. God has great plans for your life, but first He is forging you and turning you into steel to turn you into the instrument He desires you to be.

(Acts 7:20 NKJV) "At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months.

(Acts 7:21 NKJV) "But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son.

(Acts 7:22 NKJV) "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds.

(Acts 7:23 NKJV) "Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the children of Israel.

(Acts 7:24 NKJV) "And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian.

(Acts 7:25 NKJV) "For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand.

(Acts 7:26 NKJV) "And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?'

(Acts 7:27 NKJV) "But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?'

Stephen Points Out – Moses tried to Lead Israel / Beat it – who are you to Rule Us

Stephen is rehearsing history with a purpose as he points out to these leaders, hey Moses came to deliver the children of Israel from the bondage and oppression of the Egyptians, and his very own people said "beat it, we will not have you rule over us". Those words no doubt would resonate through these religious leaders ears as they would be reminded that only a short while ago the crowds cried out the same:

Luke 19:14 (NKJV) *"But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'*

Jhn 19:15 (NKJV) But they cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar!"

(Acts 7:28 NKJV) 'Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?'

(Acts 7:29 NKJV) "Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons.

After Rejected – Moses took Gentile Bride / Interesting for the Church Today is Bride

Interestingly, after he was rejected, Moses went into the land of the Gentiles, took a Gentile bride by the name of Zipporah, and had two sons. So, too, when the Jewish people rejected Jesus Christ, He went to the Gentiles, took a Gentile bride—the church—and begat many sons. For these religious leaders it won't be long until they see and hear of the Gentiles coming to Jesus (as we will study in chapter 10 of Acts).

Romans 1:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Acts 10:34-37 (NKJV) ³⁴Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. ³⁵But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him. ³⁶The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all— ³⁷that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

(Acts 7:30 NKJV) "And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai.

(Acts 7:31 NKJV) "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him,

(Acts 7:32 NKJV) "saying, 'I am the God of your fathers; the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and dared not look.

(Acts 7:33 NKJV) 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.

Holy Ground / Street Ministry in California – Holy Ground

May we always remember, every time we open the Word here at CC Anne Arundel County, that we are standing on Holy Ground – because The Word that became flesh (John 1:1-14), is God Himself and every time we open the Word, we are standing before God Himself. Holy means set-apart, not common, and when we open the Word we are to remember that we are entering into something totally set-apart, something not common, but entering into Holy Ground. I remember doing street ministry when I was out in California, and I had a couple people around me, and they were hanging on my every word, God was moving in their heart. Now there are dozens and dozens of people walking up and down the streets, but these 2 guys from this other church were out handing out flyers to promote some event they were having, and they see I had two live ones here, someone who was really interested in hearing about the things of the Lord, and so they stand there hovering over us (which was distracting in itself) but then they stepped in between us and gave these guys their flyers and started telling them about their event. They totally cut me off right in the middle of presenting the gospel. I didn't hold back, I locked and loaded, and told them take their flyers and hit the road, for this is holy ground, for the word of God is going forth and let no man defile it. So they hit the road, after mumbling something about me (couldn't quite hear what they said), but the guys I was witnessing to had eyes bulging wide-open, and I told them about Moses and the burning bush, and the command to take his sandals off for he was on holy ground. I took those men to Holy Ground, and when I walked away I knew that if they would lock that into their very beings, that the Word of God is Holy Ground, then the Bible would no longer be another book amongst the hundred on the shelf, but that the Bible would be God Himself waiting to commune and communicate with them.

Stephen recounting History – While bringing them Back to Holy Ground / Churches Today

Stephen is recounting Jewish history, while at the same time he is bringing these religious leaders that God's Word is holy ground, and they have forgotten God's Word, they have replaced God's Word with their traditions and their personal feeling on how God's religion should be, and Stephen is bringing them back to Holy Ground – may the Churches today bring people back to

Holy Ground, may we give the Word of God, and nothing but the Word of God, nothing more, and nothing less.

(Acts 7:34 NKJV) "I have surely seen the oppression of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt."

Lord declares – Seen, Heard, Have Come / Says same Today / Amorites / Come Right Time

The incubator is done, it is now verse 17, it is now the “time of the promise”. The Lord declares, “I have seen,” then, “I have heard,” and finally, “I am come.” And He says the same thing today to you who are feeling the pressures of some Pharaoh or the bondage of some burden. “Where is He?” you say. “I’ve been waiting so long. Why isn’t He working?” He is working—but in ways we won’t see for perhaps many years, or possibly until we get to heaven. Unbeknownst to the children of Israel, all the while they were slaving in Egypt, the Lord was working in the Promised Land—which at that time was inhabited by Amorites, Jebusites, Hittites, Hivites, Canaanites, and Perizzites! God, who is slow to anger and full of mercy, gave these people four hundred years to get it together—to repent and to turn from their wicked ways. Yet for four centuries they fell deeper and deeper into depravity—offering their babies on the incandescent arms of Moloch, practicing indescribably aberrant sexual lifestyles, living heathen, pagan lives (oh how I tremble for any nation that is killing babies, have strange sex such as homosexuality, and just plain living with no regards to the One True and Living God). Thus, after a grace period of four hundred years, God was fully justified in saying to the Jews upon their release from Egypt, “Rid the land of these people.” The Lord still declares, “I have seen. I have heard. I am come.” Trust Him to come at the right time—the fullness of time—to deliver you.

(Acts 7:17 NKJV) "But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt"

Don't Forget God's Mathematics / Hang in There – Multiplication is Coming

Forget not of God's mathematics that we have studied here in the Book of Acts, the addition, the subtraction, and the multiplication. Hang in there guys, don't grow weary of doing good, for eye has not seen.....Gang, the world has nothing to offer you except bobblets and trinkets, all junk that will leave you empty. Wait for the Promise, continue in the Promise.

1 Corinthians 2:9 (NKJV) ⁹*But as it is written:*

*"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."*

Galatians 6:9 (NKJV) ⁹*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

(Acts 7:35 NKJV) "This Moses whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?' is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush.

(Acts 7:36 NKJV) "He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years.

(Acts 7:37 NKJV) "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.'

You rejected Joseph – Moses – Doing the Same to the Messiah

Stephen twisted the knife by reminding his Jewish audience that not only did they reject Joseph, failing to recognize him until they saw him the second time—but they did the same thing to Moses, and you men are doing the same thing to Jesus, whom Moses wrote would come:

Stephen is Martyred (6:8 – 7:60)

Part 3 (7:38 - 60)

Part 3 of 3 / Waiting on Tables – Synagogue / Not by Mighty Arm – but Word of God

We are in part 3 of our 3 part study on the stoning of Stephen. Stephen goes from waiting on tables to standing before the highest and most respected religious leaders in all of Jerusalem, and he totally confounds them with the Word of God. They accuse Stephen of blaspheming the Law of God, Moses (the Patriarch of Israel), and of blaspheming the Holy Temple. But Stephen refutes their accusations with power and might, not in the strength of his arm, not with a loud voice, but by the Word of God.

We have study up to this point:

[Stephen's Sermon – The Call of Abraham \(1-8\)](#)

Stephen took them back to the beginning, back to the promises of God, the Word of God, that God promised (gave His Word) that the Messiah would come through the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that in itself should have opened their eyes to the remembrance of Genesis 22 when Abraham went to sacrifice his son Isaac, and Abraham said God will provide Himself the sacrifice (Gen 22). We also talked about Laminin and the cross being the building block of life and that life can only come through the cross.

Genesis 22:8 (KJV) ⁸And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

[Stephen's Sermon – The Patriarchs in Egypt \(9-16\)](#)

Then Stephen recounted the story of the Jacob and family going to Egypt during the famine, and the brother selling Joseph into slavery, but God used it for His glory, and how the brothers didn't recognize Joseph the first time they went to Egypt, and how Stephen is pointing out to the religious that you aren't recognizing your brother Jesus who came to save and sustain you just as Joseph did for his brothers. We also talked how we need to have eyes open to recognize the opportunities God puts before us everyday.

[Stephen's Sermon – God delivers Israel by Moses \(17-37\)](#)

Then we looked at Stephen pointing out to them how Israel rejected Moses the first time he came to deliver them out of the bondage and slavery of Egypt, and how Stephen is showing the religious leaders that they did the same to Jesus. We talked about the Holy Ground Moses stood on when God spoke, and how we need to do the same every time we open this Word and God speaks to us, that we are to see it as standing on Holy Ground, not some common book, but partaking and the touching of God Himself. A time of intimacy, a time of love, a time of the two becoming one.

Pick it back up – V38

So we pick it back up and will finish this study starting in verse 38 where Stephen is still talking about Moses and the children of Israel in the wilderness right after they have left Egypt.

[Stephen's Sermon – Israel Rebels Against God](#)

(Acts 7:38 NKJV) "This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,

(Acts 7:39 NKJV) "whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt,

(Acts 7:40 NKJV) "saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.'

(Acts 7:41 NKJV) "And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.

(Acts 7:42 NKJV) "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: 'Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

(Acts 7:43 NKJV) You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.'

While Moses interceded they Played / Gloried in works of Hand / Sent them to Babylon

Stephen is addressing Israel's continual problem of making idols and worshipping idols, which started at Mount Sinai and continued until they were taken into captivity by Babylon. Stephen is saying while Moses was interceding for the nation, the nation was playing games, dancing, drinking, and all kinds of wicked things as they worshipped the golden calf. They made an idol, they gloried in the work of their own hand, and continually rebelled against God. Israel continually followed after idols, and a point came (after God's grace ended) that He said, "If it's idols you want," God declared, "I'll send you to Babylon where idolatry is flourishing." For seventy years, the Jews would live in Babylon.

Stephen saying thought you were so Right / Think might be Wrong Again / Talmud

Stephen is saying to these men, they thought they were so right then making the golden calf, but ended up being so wrong, could you be doing the same thing? Could you right now think you are so right about Jesus not being your intercessor, that you are as wrong as the forefathers were? Are you trusting in your "handi-work", your customs and traditions that you can't even see what is right before you, the Messiah. In the Talmud (which is the Jewish commentary on the OT) they don't even identify the golden calf event specifically, they refer to it as "that unspeakable deed". The rabbis didn't want to talk about, and essentially blotted it out of the Talmud. The religious leaders wanted to bury the subject, but Stephen is being sure to bring it up. People can forget how messed up they are, how much in need of help they are, because they refuse to recognize their faults and failings. By doing so they create this facade of spirituality, so much so they even fool themselves. We need to look at ourselves, examine ourselves in light of the Word, so we can humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord, and then let it be He who lifts us up:

James 4:10 (KJV) *¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

You're the Exception – NOT!

Let me say this also to the Believer here today, (God's grace has it's limit we have just seen with Israel and it idols), if this is where you are at today, know that you are not an exception, many of Believer's compromise against God's Word, but somehow they think they will be the exception because their situation has some unique twist to it. You will be no exceptions, for there is not one exception to the word of God. Truth is truth, lies are lies, God don't take no alibis, right is right, and wrong is wrong, don't go messing where you don't belong (as the Dennis Agajanian song goes). God's grace has a limit, at what point I do not know, but don't try to find it, repent. The Nation of Israel continually looked for it, and they continually found it, and they continually regretted it.

I Believe Stephen Prophetically Speaking / in 30 Years Titus will Destroy Jerusalem

Let me just add that there is another beautiful application here too, for as Stephen said the Nation of Israel was taken into captivity, removed from the land and taken into a foreign land concerning Israel going to Babylon; I believe he is also prophetically speaking of what is going to happen to these very same men in 30 years as Titus and the 10th Roman Legion will come destroy the Temple, slaughter hundreds of thousands of Jews (history says the blood flowed through Jerusalem like a river (up to the ankles of man), and the majority of the remaining alive will be dispersed abroad.

How many will Remember Stephen's Sermon / Christian – Keep talking End Times

I wonder how many of these men remembered this message of Stephen in 70AD when Titus came in and conquered the land. Christian, don't grow weary, don't worry what people think, but when you get the opportunity you tell the unbelievers about the rapture, about the Tribulation, about the End Times, for it may be those words that flood back to them when it does happen, and

they will say it is exactly like he/she said it would be, and they will remember everything else you had said, you must receive Jesus Christ. To the ends of the earth, until the end of the earth. If you truly believe in the teachings of the Last Days, then your actions will follow what you believe, and you will be active in the search and rescue mission of our great calling.

Stephen's Sermon – God's True Tabernacle

(Acts 7:44 NKJV) "Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen,
(Acts 7:45 NKJV) "which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David,
(Acts 7:46 NKJV) "who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob.
(Acts 7:47 NKJV) "But Solomon built Him a house.
(Acts 7:48 NKJV) "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says:
(Acts 7:49 NKJV) 'Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest?
(Acts 7:50 NKJV) Has My hand not made all these things?'

Accused of Blaspheming Temple / Stephen Points God doesn't Dwell in Buildings

Keep the context in mind. To these people who were so concerned about the temple, Stephen quotes the prophet Isaiah, saying, "God never even asked for a temple. It's foolish to think you can box the almighty God into a little temple." You guys are limiting the Mighty God in that you don't allow room for Him to come in the flesh (as Jesus would say destroy this Temple and it will raise again in 3 days. How men still today miss God because He doesn't fit into the little box they have made for Him. They say well I can't see how a God of love could allow so much suffering in the world, or they say God would never send someone to hell, or where was God when such and such happened. They put God into some little package that has no loose ends, and they miss Him totally:

Romans 11:33-35 (NKJV) ³³Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

³⁴ "For who has known the mind of the LORD?

Or who has become His counselor?"³⁵

³⁵ "Or who has first given to Him

And it shall be repaid to him?"

By Doing So – Miss Him Dwelling in Us / It is True – He is In You

But even the Believer can miss it too, how we can think of Him as the God who resides in one place, heaven, and by doing that, we miss/forget/ that He says that all who will come to Him, He will dwell and take up residence within their very being. The Holy God living in you! It is true Christian, He dwells in you – can you grasp that? He is here now, we aren't just talking about Him, we are at one with Him, as He lives within you:

1 Cor 3:16 (NKJV) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Street Witnessing in California

I remember doing street ministry out in California and I had gone to a local fair/carnival and was sharing the gospel with people; well I met this one young man early 20's probably and as I spoke about Christ and the gospel he was kind of giving me that look, like yea yea whatever but when I told him, "and then God will take up residence with you, dwell inside your body to lead and guide you", his eyes got all big, totally locked-on and said "what", are you serious! I said absolutely for the Word says so! Hey now, Buddha doesn't, Allah doesn't, Krishna doesn't, nor any other of these false religions, only Jesus Christ does.

Unrecognized – Unrealized / Hope of Glory (Confidence – Mystery made Known)

Christ in us is one of the most unrecognized, unrealized, and under-utilized blessings/power in all the Christian faith. Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27); now that word for hope doesn't

mean I really hope this going to happen, or turn out this way, but it means “confidence”. The mystery has been revealed, it has been made known what are the riches of the glory - and that is Christ in you, living within you. The confidence of glory, for we know it is true, He dwells in man, **Colossians 1:27 (NKJV)** ²⁷*To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

Not Distant – Here Right Now / Not come Earth Once – But Again and Again

He isn't a distant and far off God, He is the God that is here right now. He isn't the God that came to earth once and that was it, He is the God that comes to earth daily, as every day someone new opens their heart to Him and says Lord come into my life. He comes from heaven to earth again and again.

He has Come to Dwell in You – Kick the Devil – this One is Mine

He has come to dwell in you, Christ in you the hope (confidence) of glory (glory – the revealing of God Himself to you and through you). He has come into you to give you eternal life, He has come into you to kick the Devil in the teeth and say “this one is Mine”, back off; and by the way that is why the devil hates you so much, because when he sees you, he sees Christ in you, and it drives him mad. He is the God, well check out this skit

Lifeshouse Everything Skit:

http://www.godtube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=ee73e63418003b47d7d5

Confidence of Glory / Not Distant

Christ in you, the confidence of glory, Glory living in you. Not a distant far off God, but a God so near He dwells in you. Christian, perfect and complete love lives within you. Let Him have His way in you, to be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Do you need more love? Perfect love dwells within you. Are you fearful, Perfect love cast out all fear, and man I love that video watching Jesus protecting His child.

1 John 4:17-18 (KJV) ¹⁷*Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.* ¹⁸*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

Why Christ IN You – Promise – Purity - Power

Why Christ in you? Let me give just 3 things, of a list that is a million, but I'll give you three. Promise, Purity, and Power.

Promise – as a down payment of His guarantee that you are His and He is yours, and that will never change:

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³*In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,* ¹⁴*who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Purity – For the call to purity in the Believer's life. In the OT, we continually read that the Temple was a place that was called to be Holy and Pure, never to be defiled because the True and Living God's presence was in that place. So is the calling for every believer today, cleanse the Temple, keep it Holy and undefiled for the One True and Living God dwells there.

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

Power – The Word that became flesh and dwelt amongst men, wants to become flesh again, and again, and again! Let Him have His way in you, to be filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by the Holy Spirit. Let the Word become flesh again, through you. You can only do that by dying to self, and saying Jesus take the wheel.

John 1:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Philippians 2:5-8 (NKJV) ⁵*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,* ⁶*who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,* ⁷*but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and*

coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Stephen's Sermon – Israel Resists the Holy Spirit

(Acts 7:51 NKJV) "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.

Issue not me Reviling – But You Rejecting

"The issue," Stephen declared, "is not me reviling the holy temple. The issue is you resisting the Holy Spirit."

Stephen brings Application to Sermon / O-I-A

So now Stephen brings the application to his sermon, and every Bible study you teach or hear needs to have application to it, what does the Scripture say, what does it mean, and how does it apply to your life.

Stephen lays it Out – Stiffneck / Context face Shining / Not Attacking – but Loving

Stephen lays it out there, "you stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears", but we know the context, and that is that his face is shining. He isn't attacking them, he is loving them for we know that from the context of this passage, as we see him with a face shining as an angel (Acts 6:11-15). Satan has done a masterful job of convincing Christians that if they tell people they are going to hell that we are being harsh and judgmental. Believer, the most loving thing you can do to someone who is perishing is to tell them they are perishing. If that loved one was sleeping on the couch and the house started to burn down, no one would accuse you of being unloving if you awoke them and said get out of this house before you burn with it. No one says that the firefighters in California are unloving when they rescue that family moments before the flames engulf their home. When you tell a person they are perishing apart from Christ, have the glow of heaven in your eyes, have love in your voice; if you can't tell them in love, then its better to remain silent until you can come back and tell them in love.

(Acts 6:11 NKJV) Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God."

(Acts 6:12 NKJV) And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

(Acts 6:13 NKJV) They also set up false witnesses who said, "This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law;

(Acts 6:14 NKJV) "for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us."

(Acts 6:15 NKJV) And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.

(Acts 7:52 NKJV) "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

(Acts 7:53 NKJV) "who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

Jews were Brutal to the Prophets / You accuse Me – You kill the Prophets & Messiah

The Jews were brutal to the prophets. They tried to stone Moses. They put Isaiah into a dead tree trunk and sawed it in half. They threw Jeremiah into dungeons several times, they killed Zechariah in the temple. Stephen is saying "You accuse me of slighting Moses," Stephen argued. "But you have slain the prophets and even the Messiah Himself."

Issue isn't me Blaspheming – You Breaking the Law

"The issue is not my blaspheming the law," declared Stephen. "The issue is your breaking the law." And they will break the law again by being murders as they murder Stephen for an unjust reason.

Stephen Stoned

(Acts 7:54 NKJV) When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

(Acts 7:55 NKJV) But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,

Stephen Began Sermon talking About God's Glory – Ends it Seeing Glory / Talk About It

Stephen began his sermon by talking about the God of glory (7:2). At the end of his sermon, he saw the glory of God. That's the way it always is. Whenever you start talking to people about some quality of the Lord, by the time you've finished the conversation, you find yourself enjoying and seeing that very quality in your own heart. It's incredible how that works. Start telling someone how wonderful Jesus is, and by the time you conclude, you'll be totally in wonder of Jesus. Begin sharing about the God of grace, and you'll find yourself receiving the grace of God. That is why I encourage you to share your faith—not because it is a job to do—but because it is a joy to experience.

- ***"I'm so dry," you say.***

When was the last time you talked to someone about Jesus?

- ***"It's just not very real to me."***

When was the last time you got into an interesting full-on dialogue with someone about what you believe?

- ***"I'm just not experiencing joy."***

When was the last time you ministered to someone who was depressed?

- ***"I just don't know if I really have faith."***

When was the last time you shared what faith you do have with someone who had less than you?

(Acts 7:56 NKJV) and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Son of Man

There in verse 56 uses the name "Son of Man" which these religious heard Jesus refer to Himself as, which is a reference back to Daniel 7, referring to the Messiah coming in the clouds, and it will totally drives them crazy:

Dan 7:13 *I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.*

Matt 12:40 *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

Seated at Right Hand – Standing at Right Hand

Many times in Scripture, we read of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. Here, however, we see Him standing—not in anxiety, but to welcome Stephen into glory.

Mark 16:19 *So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 *Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.*

Hebrews 12:2 *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of [our] faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Stephen 1st of Long Line / Stephen stood on Earth – Jesus Stands in Heaven / Matt 10:32

Stephen, the first of a long line of Believers standing for Jesus, and we see as Stephen stood for Jesus on earth, Jesus stood for Stephen in heaven.

Matt 10:32 (NKJV) *"Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.*

Matt 10:33 (NKJV) *"But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.*

Not sure we will Face This / FRM Chaplains

I am not sure that any of us will face this in our lifetime, but you never know; what I do now is that there are many men and woman dying for their faith "this very day". We live in such a blessed land,

and really where much is giving much is required. As many of you know we support missionaries and chaplains in Africa, and the fact is that some of those chaplains get killed in the war, even though they don't fight in the battle. Their role is to minister Jesus Christ to the soldiers who are trying to fend off the radical Muslims that are trying to make an Islamic nation there in that region. Some of these chaplains we support may die before the year is out – now that isn't too far from home for us, for we are directly linked to them. But throughout the world, 100's of thousands are beaten, tortured, and killed for their faith every year – and in every case, Jesus is standing, welcoming them home, saying well done thy good and faithful servant.

Luke 12:48 (NKJV) ⁴⁸But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

(Acts 7:57 NKJV) Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord;

Amazing Word Picture – Acting like 6 year Olds

Amazing word picture here in that we see these prim and proper religious leaders turn into little 5 year olds by putting their fingers in their ears and screaming on the top of their lungs (we aren't listening to you, we aren't listening to you).

When faced with Repentance – Man's True Heart Comes Out

When faced with repentance, man's true heart comes out (that applies to the saved to I might add).

Spurgeon – Hot Water

Charles Spurgeon was a minister often accused of being "controversial". One day a friend of Spurgeon's remarked, "So, I hear you are in hot water again." "No, I'm not the one in hot water," Spurgeon answered. "The other fellows are. I'm the man who makes the water boil!"

Contrast Anger of Crowd – Peace of Stephen / Crowd looked Down – Stephen looked Up

The contrast is great between the uptightness, anger, and bitterness of the crowd and the peace and tranquility of Stephen, who had the "face of an angel" (see 6:15). While these men were frenzied, Stephen was totally at peace. Why? Because while the crowd looked down on Stephen, Stephen looked up to heaven.

(Acts 7:58 NKJV) and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Here Introduction of Saul

Here is the introduction of Saul (who would later be converted and called Paul) who witnessed this account first-hand, and I believe this was the beginning of the end of Saul, and the beginning of Paul, as Stephen's witness touched to the very core of Saul's being.

So Concerned about Law – They break their Own

It was illegal for them to kill someone within the city limits, so they take Stephen outside the city. However, here these religious are so concerned about the law that they break it by murdering Stephen, which is totally against their practiced Jewish Law that you couldn't kill someone without at least having 1 night to sleep on the guilty verdict, in case God would speak to them and tell them to give mercy. So here is another illegal trial just like they did to Jesus. You are always in good company when people come against you just like they did Jesus.

(Acts 7:59 NKJV) And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

(Acts 7:60 NKJV) Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

How Stephen at Peace / Rev 5 – See Him as Lamb Slain / Look Heaven – See Scars

How could Stephen be so peaceful—dying, without fighting back or lashing out, crying, “O, Lord, don’t hold this against these guys”? He looked into heaven and saw Jesus. You see, Revelation 5:6 tells us that when we see Him, we will see Him as a Lamb having been slain. Therefore, if I’m looking up to heaven and seeing the Lord, inevitably I will understand that the scars He still bears were caused by me. My sin, my rebellion, my carnality, my depravity caused Him to be slaughtered on Calvary. And as I look into heaven and see what my sin did, what my sin wrought, I have no other alternative but to say even of those who are gnashing their teeth and throwing stones at me, “Lord Jesus, forgive them. Don’t hold this against them.”

Rev 5:6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.

When truly See Jesus – Amazed at Grace / Lower Sight – Defense / Are You Tense - Up

When I truly see Jesus, I have no other choice but to be amazed at His grace and to be at peace with others. It’s only when I lower my sight and begin to look at people horizontally (rerun what they said or did to me over and over in my mind) that I want to say, “Who do you think you are to say that about me?” It’s only when I take my eyes off Jesus that I become defensive and antagonistic, uptight and combative, abrasive, callous, and critical. What about you? Are you tense? Nervous? Uptight? Losing sleep, hair or teeth unnecessarily? The solution is so simple: Don’t look down on people. Look up into heaven and see the Lord. See how He has forgiven you. See the grace He has shown to you. See His mercies extended in your direction.

Chapter 8

Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12

The Jesus Movement (Acts 8:1-3)

New Section / Power – 3000 – 5000 – Stephen / Scattered – Launching / to ends of Earth

We are now moving into a new section of this wonderful and inspiring book. The Church waited for the power from on high that would make them witnesses there in Jerusalem; and we have studied through that mighty work as we seen 3,000 saved on the Day of Pentecost, another 5,000 after the lame man is healed and Peter preaches at the Temple, and then just finished seeing Stephen preach boldly and faithfully, ending his life for “His” witness. The resultant is that a man name Saul is going to bring havoc upon the church, going from house to house to kill or beat the Believer’s – but little does Saul know that he is launching the Church into the spreading of Gospel, just as Jesus said, to Judea and Samaria, which is the next step on the way to the end of the earth, until the end of the earth.

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

(Acts 8:1 NKJV) Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

(Acts 8:2 NKJV) And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

(Acts 8:3 NKJV) As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Saul Persecutes the Church

(Acts 8:1 NKJV) Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Paul Cast Vote

Was Paul actually a thrower of stones? No, but we do read that Saul cast his vote (consenting – means to vote) for the stoning (thus why we can believe that Saul was a voting member of the Sanhedrin .

Saul witnesses Glow – Forgive them / Like Dagger – Causes Response / Word - Response

Saul witnessed Stephen’s face glowing like an angel, he heard his words of “forgive them, they know not what they do”; and it was like a dagger in his heart. It caused a response, and the response was anger, hatred, and aggression. The Word of God is meant to cause a response. For every word that is ever read or heard, God’s intention is a response from the receiver. Take note of that as you sit here in this place today, as you open your Bible in your devotion tomorrow,

as you tune into the radio, that every word spoken is intended by God for a response. Lord I hear this word, now how will I respond to it.

Saul – Cut to Heart

Saul is cut to the heart as we read in chapter 7;

Acts 7:54 (NKJV) ⁵⁴When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

Responds Violently / Sees himself as Philippians 3

That piercing causes him to respond violently for you see Saul at this very moments sees himself as he will later record for us in Philippians chapter 3.

Philippians 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

circumcised the eighth day – Saul sees himself as a faithful Jew from the day he was born, being circumcised on the 8th day as in accordance with the Law.

of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin – Saul says I can trace my lineage all the way back to Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin has quite the bragging rights in Israel and Paul feels the same about himself. Look at some specific points we know of the tribe of Benjamin from reading the OT.

Jacob – Benjamin some tough Dudes

Jacob starts in his parting dissertation, his dying words to be recorded in Jewish history forever, that the boys of Benjamin are some dudes you don't want to mess with.

(Genesis 49:27 NKJV) "Benjamin is a ravenous wolf; In the morning he shall devour the prey, And at night he shall divide the spoil."

OT – Fierce in Battle / Fought for King David / Sling – 100yds - Archers

The tribe of Benjamin produced the tough fellows. History tells how fierce the Benjamites were in battle.. There were a group of Benjamites who fought with David and they were skillful with the sling (left or right handed). They could split a hair at a hundred yards it was said. The warlike nature of the small tribe of Benjamin became well known, as exhibited in their archers and slingers (Judges 20:16, 1 Chronicles 8:40, 12:2, 2 Chronicles 14:8, 17:17, Judges 19&20):

(1 Chronicles 8:40 NIV) The sons of Ulam were brave warriors who could handle the bow. They had many sons and grandsons--150 in all. All these were the descendants of Benjamin.

(1 Chronicles 12:1 NIV) These were the men who came to David at Ziklag, while he was banished from the presence of Saul son of Kish (they were among the warriors who helped him in battle;

(1 Chronicles 12:2 NIV) they were armed with bows and were able to shoot arrows or to sling stones right-handed or left-handed; they were kinsmen of Saul from the tribe of Benjamin):

(2 Chronicles 14:8 NIV) Asa had an army of three hundred thousand men from Judah, equipped with large shields and with spears, and two hundred and eighty thousand from Benjamin, armed with small shields and with bows. All these were brave fighting men.

1st King

The first king of Israel, Saul, came from the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9), and he may have even been named after King Saul:

1 Samuel 9:1-2 (NKJV) ¹There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish the son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Bechorath, the son of Aphiah, a Benjamite, a mighty man of power. ²And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.

a Hebrew of the Hebrews – Saul stating that my lineage is pure it isn't intermingled with any Gentile blood, my blood is pure and undefiled.

concerning the law, a Pharisee – Saul saying I am a master of the Law, in fact he was a Sanhedrin (part of the 70 master teacher and religious leaders), and he was even trained personally by Gamaliel the great Jewish rabbi. Jewish historians tell us that Gamaliel's one

criticism of Saul was that it was impossible to find enough reading material for him. This is not surprising, since those who study Greek tell us that Paul's vocabulary and sentence structure is the most sophisticated of any Greek writer. The guy was brilliant.

concerning zeal, persecuting the church – Saul considered himself the great protector of the Jewish way.

concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless – Saul kept all the law, well so he thought until he said he came to the understanding of what coveting truly meant. But at this point in our story/study, he considered himself perfect in the outward keeping of the law. He honored the Sabbath, never used the Lord's name in vain, had never told a lie, and had never stolen. Perfect, blameless.

Romans 7:7 (NKJV) ⁷*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."*

Resume of Greatness / Walked in Temple – People stood in Awe

What a resume of greatness, no doubt when Saul walked into the Temple precinct, people just stood and watched, probably even afraid to talk to him because they would say something stupid and be rebuked by him.

Stephen tears down all Things – in 1 Verse

Stephen cuts him to the heart because Stephen tears down all the things Saul took confidence in one statement and one reflection.

(Acts 7:51 NKJV) *"You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you."*

1 Statement Destroys All

In that one statement, Stephen destroys

circumcised the eighth day – Stephen says you uncircumcised in heart and ears, you may have been circumcised according to the flesh, but your heart is still wicked. You are as dirty as Goliath Stephen likens them to.

1 Samuel 17:26 (NKJV) ²⁶*Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"*

of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews – Stephen says you are stiff necked, and that is the only time that word can be found in the New Testament, but it was used in the Old Testament and it was used by God to say that the children of Israel are a stiffnecked people and need to be consumed. As God said then, Stephen is saying now, don't care you are of the tribe of Israel, God's chosen people, the rebellion in your heart kindles my anger and my wrath such that I should destroy you. Stephen by using the word stiffnecked is tying all these religious leaders (Saul for sure) back to Exodus 32, and all the other mentions of a religious, but rebellious people.

Exodus 32:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹*And the LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation."*

concerning the law, a Pharisee, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless – Saul took great pride in his knowledge and keeping of the law, Stephen says it means nothing because you reject the Holy Spirit. The prophet Isaiah spoke about this and these religious scholars would all be well aware of what God said about the people, and that is that they rejected the Holy Spirit because of their stiffnecked hearts and ears.

Isaiah 63:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, And He fought against them.*

Still said with Glow / Saul not Stand It / Outdone by Busboy / Wise gets Defensive

Stephen could say those things, with the glow of heaven upon his face, and Saul couldn't stand it that some waiter of tables, a busboy, could have words that cut him like a knife, and do it with love in his heart and words. How the (so-called) wise get defensive when the simple confound them, their pride and ego overcome their intellect and intelligence.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29 (NKJV) ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence.

All Saul Believed – Dismantled / All took Pride in – Destroyed in 15 Minutes / Try Hold

All that Saul had believed in and counted on has been destroyed by Stephen's preaching. Stephen completely dismantles Saul's doctrine and theology. A busboy totally dismantles all that Saul counted dear to his life, the very reason Saul considered himself something, his whole purpose and reasoning for living – destroyed in one 15 minute sermon by a busboy. Imagine what that must have been like, my whole life is in question right now. Paul will try to hold on, but he won't last long. When Jesus meets Saul He will say, Saul why are you kicking against the goads

Acts 9:5 (NKJV) ⁵And he said, "Who are You, Lord?"

Then the Lord said, *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."*

Saul try Resist – but Beginning of End / Changed inside Out / Nametag too - Paul

Saul will try to resist for awhile, but Stephen's witness is the beginning of the end of the man name Saul, and he will be born-again, changed inside and out, even his nametag will be changed from Saul to Paul.

If Here Today – Life Built on Anything other than Jesus / Worth in System – Good Person

I hope if there is anyone here today (believer or seeker) that has built their life on anything other than Jesus Christ, that if you are anything like Saul was:

- considering your worth and value in a religious system rather than a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, that if you consider you worth before God because you are of the tribe of Benjamin (in that you are claiming your parents or grandparents relationship to God as your own),
- or that you are a keeper of the law, in that you are a "good person" and that you do good deeds,

I pray that this word from today will totally dismantles all that you trust in, all that you count dear, all that you consider is why God will receive you as His own, I pray that like Saul you are cut to the heart, and that this is the beginning of the end of the things you counted and trusted in, and that you will see that is Jesus, and that it is all Jesus, and nothing but Jesus. If God has pricked your heart today, please do not leave this place until you have talked to one of us here so that we may pray with you so that you may come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, have your sins wiped away, have eternal life, and have life and that more abundant while you walk with Jesus today:

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Young Naval Officer

I am reminded of the story of the young naval officer, after nearly completing his first overseas cruise, a young ensign was given an opportunity to display his capabilities at getting the ship under way. With a stream of commands, he had the decks buzzing with men and soon the ship was steaming out the channel en route to the states. His efficiency established a new record for getting a destroyer under way, so he was not surprised when a seaman approached him with a message from the captain. Strangely though, it was a radio message and it read: "My personal congratulations to you upon completing your underway preparation exercise according to the book and with amazing speed. In your haste, however, you have overlooked one of the unwritten rules--make sure the captain is aboard before getting under way." We may think our lives are in order. We may have them managed them to a tee and people may wish they were us -- our businesses are prospering, our kids are doing well in school, our marriage is sweeter than ever.

But if the Captain is not on board, at some point, we're going to have to head back and start again

Pray All See that it is Jesus – All Jesus – Nothing But Jesus

I pray that you will see that it is Jesus, and that it is all Jesus, and nothing but Jesus.

Mind You – part Sanhedrin – top 70 / Foundation under Attack / Barack Obama

Mind you, Saul is part of the Sanhedrin Council, which already puts him in the top 70 of the most respected religious men in all of Israel. Saul very well could be considered the number 1 man, and here Stephen's words are attacking the very foundation he stands on. Could you imagine if someone came on the scene today and said, hey I have inside information the Senator Barack Obama is not a natural born citizen of the United States, therefore he is disqualified from being the President of the USA. Could you imagine the violent reaction that would come from him and his political camp? All that he has accomplished has come for one thing, to be the next president of the greatest nation in the world, and with one claim, it could all come to not, all that he has done his past 20 years in political office, for not, all that he has done in overcome the favored, the great Clinton political machine, for not, all the millions and millions spent to win the race, for not – with one claim that could be proven, he was not a natural born American.

Where Saul is At – Stephen says whole Religious System Void / New Temple in Town

That is where Saul is at, and Stephen is saying the whole religious system is void, if for not, there is a New Temple in town, and His name is Jesus Christ. You religious guys, hope you kept your fishing gear for you are unemployed starting today.

John 2:18-21 (NKJV) ¹⁸So the Jews answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?"

¹⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**"

²⁰Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?"

²¹But He was speaking of the temple of His body.

Saul sees World Crumbling / If Jesus Movement Grows – he's Done / Sadly People

Saul sees his whole world crumbling before his very eyes, and he knows that if this Jesus movement gets much more movement, all that he worked for is for not. Sadly, lots and lots of people today are trying to crush the Jesus movement before it gets moving in their lives.

- Hey my wife is getting a little too into this Jesus stuff, I must violently oppose it.
- Hey if I allow this Jesus movement to get moving there is no way I going to get ahead in the business world by doing things His way.
- Hey I've been listening to these claims of Christ now as I have been coming to church for a few months, but if I let this Jesus movement go much further I'm going to have to make some hard decisions, like repent, and I'm not ready to do that, I'm enjoying myself too much.

Hey – Jesus Movement is Moving – Can't Stop It / Miss Out? / Paul Gets More / More Hold

Hey, the Jesus movement is moving, you can't stop it, and it will keep moving – 2,000 years and counting. People, (Christians included) think they are going to miss out, give up, lose out by following and committing their life to Jesus, but they totally miss it; Saul, who gets new life, become Paul, what was he fighting to hold on to? The top 70, maybe even number 1, in one nation (Israel). What does Paul get (and I believe an example for all us), he doesn't get to be top dog at the temple, he gets to become the Temple of the Living God. He doesn't get to be number religious man in the Nation Israel, he gets to become the greatest teacher evangelist (next to Jesus) in the history of the world. Who was the High Priest of the Temple in 70AD right before it was destroyed? Who knows, does anyone really care? But here we are today, 2000 years later, reading about a man name Paul. What did Saul give up? Nothing! Come to Christ those who don't believe, Believer you commit to Christ fully, and you will receive above and beyond anything you are trying to hold on to!

Can't Stop It / Question is Why want To

You can't stop the Jesus Movement, the question is – Why would you want too!

(Acts 8:2 NKJV) And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Devout Men / Dictionary

Devout men carried Stephen to his burial – when I want to know the meaning of a word in the Bible I go to the original language and see what it means and how it was used at the time of the writing. Below are the Greek words that we translate to “devout”:

Eulabes - lit., "taking hold well" (eu, "well," lambano, "to take hold"), primarily, "cautious," signifies in the NT, "careful as to the realization of the presence and claims of God, reverencing God, pious, devout;"

Eusebes - from eu, "well," sebomai, "to reverence," the root seb-- signifying "sacred awe," describes "reverence" exhibited especially in actions, reverence or awe well directed.

(Note) While **eulabes** especially suggests the piety which characterizes the inner being, the soul, in its attitude towards God, **eusebes** directs us rather to the energy which, directed by holy awe of God, finds expression in devoted activity.

What Believe – Leads to What Do

So, simply, what they believe leads to what they will do.

Now look for Application through Examples

So after I get the definition, I then go and look for the application of the word in the Bible, as I look for examples and illustrations. We find this word devout (in the 2 Greek forms above) used in the following passages:

Luke 2:25 (NKJV) ²⁵And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

Acts 2:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven. ⁶And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language.

Acts 8:2 (NKJV) ²And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.

Acts 10:1-2 (NKJV) ¹There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, ²a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

Acts 22:12 (NKJV) ¹²Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,

Real Life Examples / Simeon – Men getting Body – Ananias / Common Thread – Risk Taker

So real life examples, Simeon serving in the Temple, these men come and get Stephen's body, and Ananias coming to Saul to proclaim the word of the Lord to Him. And as I look at the example of these 3 devout men, I see a common thread, and that is that they were all risk takers, and thus I see an application for me, and for you, that to be considered “devout” before the Lord, we will need to be risk takers for Jesus Christ, which simple means stepping out in faith and believing God will be God, that He is still God even outside our comfort zones.

For Some – God only God within Comfort Zone

For some people, God can only be God within their comfort zone.

First Priest to Proclaim Jesus the Christ / Believed Word enough to Proclaim It

Simeon – risk taker, you bet. He is a priest in the Temple, and he is the first priest to proclaim Jesus (this little baby) is the one promised by God. Imagine the other priest around him, hearing him make these proclamations, and they may have been saying what, are you crazy. Simeon, knew the Promises of God (that Simeon himself would not see death until he saw the Consolation of Israel), and Simeon believed, and he believed it enough to proclaim it out loud before the whole world. And there I see that a devout man/woman of God believes the promises of God, so much so that they proclaim it out loud, regardless what others may think. Simeon risked

reputation (as people no doubt called him an old cook), he risked his job (as his superiors may have said – you're done serving here, that is crazy old man). Devout men/woman of God take risks based on the word/promises of God.

Luke 2:26 (NKJV) ²⁶And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Go meet Saul the Lunatic / No no Not my Calling / 2 Lists

Ananias – talk about a risk taker, he Ananias got a job for ya says the Lord, ok Lord what is it? Go meet Saul of Taurus and give him a message from me. You mean the same Saul who is going door to door beating and killing the Christians, yes that is one says the Lord. No, no Lord that isn't my calling he could have said, but he didn't because he was a devout man, and devout men/woman of the Bible take risks for God. Let me say something about your calling, we all have them, and right now I ask you to think of what they are. Now here is the problem, we all have our list of our calling, but what is wrong is that we have another list of what are calling isn't (and sadly many times it is longer than our calling list). Your calling is what you know you have been called to, not what you haven't been called to. If Ananias had two list, I would imagine going to deliver a word from the Lord to a crazed lunatic that was killing believers would have been on the "not my calling list". You see by having a "not called" list we can limit what God wants to do in our life, because when the calling from God comes, we can say nope, can't be from the Lord because it is on the "not called" list. We need to be faithful to the "called list", and then leave ourselves open to hear what the Holy Spirit may be saying to us when something comes up that isn't on the "called list". Something you may once felt wasn't your calling wasn't your calling because you spiritually were not ready or equipped to do it, but now years later God has grown you and matured you, and now you are equipped, you need to leave yourself open to hear that. Secondly, God may be calling you to do something because you have grown stagnant in your walk, you won't leave your comfort zone, and you use the covering of the "not called list" to justify it, but God is saying I'm calling you, because you have become stagnant, moss is growing on your Bible, so Christian you need to leave yourself open for that. Devout men/woman of faith, are risk takers for the Kingdom.

Acts 9:10-14 (NKJV) ¹⁰Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias."

And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

¹¹So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. ¹²And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

¹³Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

Question this Principle – Genesis

Question that principle, I only need to reference you back to Abraham on Mount Moriah, as the Lord tells him to take Issac up to the mount and sacrifice him, and then when Abraham lifts the knife God speaks out, stop. Just imagine if Abraham had a list and that list couldn't change. But Abraham had ears to hear God call out and say, list change!

Genesis 22:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."

²Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

Genesis 22:9-12 (NKJV) ⁹Then they came to the place of which God had told him. And Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order; and he bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. ¹⁰And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

¹¹But the Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

So he said, "Here I am."

¹²And He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

Stephen's Body – If Fury not Satisfied / Israel has no Lack of Rocks

Devout Men take Stephen's body – risk takers, they just killed Stephen, and now these men come to get his body, identifying themselves, aligning themselves, with him. If the fury and hatred they had for Stephen wasn't quenched, these men are prime targets and outlets to release

their fury. I've been to Israel, and one thing that Israel is not lacking is rocks, so there would be plenty to launch on these men. Devout men and woman of God take risks for Him.

Devout take Risks – People, Problems, Places

Devout men/woman are willing to take risks, with/on People, Problems, and Places. Taking risks with people (as these men were willing to risk life and limb to go to their beloved brother Stephen), with people come problems (Simeon, what a stir he caused in the temple proclaiming the child the Christ), yet devout men/woman will take risks regardless the problems they may cause with those who don't believe the word and promises of God, and thirdly devout men/woman take risks in places, going to places that are outside their comfort zone (as Ananias goes to Damascus willing to take the risk to be faithful to the calling of God).

What an Example in our Friend Phoebe

My oh my, what an example we had in my living on Wednesday night, I have been blessed and challenged with the meeting of this woman name Phoebe from Kenya Africa. Talk about someone who took and takes risks for the King. If God is still recording the word in heaven, there is an entry that reads, "Phoebe, a devout woman of God from Kenya." What an example of a devout person. Talk about taking risks on people, problems, and places. Here is this sweet gentle-spirited woman telling her story. Sixteen years ago, she had lost two of her children to death, and then her third lay dying. She takes that child (her daughter) to the hospital and they say there is nothing they can do, she is going to die. So she grabs her child up, runs to a local church, even though she wasn't even a believer, and she lays her child out there upon the altar and cries out to the Lord, and instantly her daughter is healed. She commits her life to the Lord right there in the spot. She goes home and says Lord what is that you want me to do for you, and He speaks to her to bring the orphans into her home. So her she is in my living room, saying that her whole house was half the size of my living room, and she, her husband, her daughter, and now 6 children will all live in that home. Fast-forward, and now it is 16 years later and the orphanage now houses 115 kids (nearly all there because their parents have died of aids), they also provide food to another 400 who are living at home with their parents (most of those kids parents are infected and dying from AIDS), and they have started a middle school and high school that are giving kids educations who wouldn't have gotten one without this school (which houses 800+ students). Along with that through this one woman, they also provide medical treatment to hundreds a week). Talk about devout, will to take a risk on people (orphans and widows), problems (AIDS, famine, and starvation), and places (the African Continent).

Note: the problem is growing worse now because Kenya has beautiful beaches which are drawing tourist. These tourists are taking advantage of the poverty by getting these young girls now and paying them money for sex. The girls do it because it is the only way to provide food for their families (see the CNN article below that was written on July 31, 2008).

Devout take Risk – For Jesus on the Move / He asks who is Coming With Me

Devout people, take risks, because Jesus is on the move, it is His movement, and He is simply asking "who is coming with Me?"

(Acts 8:3 NKJV) As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.

Street Ministry – Arm Cocked / No one can Argue your Peace / Beginning of end of Saul

I remember doing street ministry in Orlando Florida some years ago, and I would sit at the bus stop (great place to meet people, and at least give them some reading material to read when they got on the bus). Well one day I was sitting there and this young man came by, he was about 21 years old, and I said to him, "hey Jesus loves you". His face got contorted, and he said what did you say, and I said "Jesus loves you", and he cocked back his arm like he was going to hit me and said say it again, and this time I leaned forward towards him and said, "Jesus loves you". He

dropped his arm and said you are a fool, a fool to believe that. I said to him, consider this, I am here sitting in total peace, bringing a message of love, while your heart is in turmoil, and you are filled with hatred, and there is the difference between us. He immediately said, you're right, that is true, and he walked away. No one can truly argue the peace of God in a person's life. What we are reading here is the beginning of the end of the man named Saul, as he sees the difference of witness in Stephen (in peace and love), and this turmoil and rage that is going on within him. Christian do you have total peace in your life? If not then you need to seek Him today and ask why, for His Word says that He will give us peace that passes all understanding: **Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV)** ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Imperfect Tense – Continually / Wild Beast mangling Prey

Made havoc – imperfect tense which means “continually without stopping.” The word for havoc was used to describe a wild animal mangling its prey. Paul's wrath was vicious, it was Adolf Hitler like.

Everybody Scattered but Apostles / It is Jesus Movement – move only if Jesus Allows

Ever wonder why everybody was scattered but the Apostles. Because it is the Jesus Movement, and no one is moved unless Jesus allows them to be moved; no one is moved unless Jesus moves them. The Apostles don't move because they are the headquarters, they are the beachfront, and the Lord has them remain in place so every believer see the headquarters is established, the flag has been planted on the hilltop, and when one looks to Jerusalem, the flag, the Church is still standing, no matter the attacks of the enemy. The Apostles remaining in Jerusalem is a true miracle, and everyone would know it, for they would know that Saul's first plan of attack is to kill the heart, and the body will die – but he can't, for it is the Jesus Movement.

Jesus Movement - So it is the Jesus Movement – who's coming?

Child prostitution up after Kenya's election bloodshed – 31 July 2008

ELDORET, Kenya (AP) -- This time last year, Janet Kimani spent her days at school and her nights fighting with her little brothers over what to watch on the family's flickering TV set.

Now, she sleeps all day and sells her skinny, 14-year-old body at night for \$3 an hour.

"There are so many of us girls on the streets these days," Janet, dressed in a black miniskirt and white blouse, told The Associated Press in Eldoret, a western Kenya town that was a flashpoint of this year's deadly postelection crisis.

Prostitution and sexual exploitation are on the rise in the wake of the violence, which killed more than 1,000 people, eviscerated the economy and forced tens of thousands of children to leave school, doctors and human rights groups say.

Sex without condoms raises alarm about AIDS

Although no firm figures are yet available, medical experts say they fear the increase in young prostitutes -- known here as "twilight girls" -- will undermine the country's recent gains in the fight against AIDS.

"With time, we'll start feeling the impact of this conflict on HIV and AIDS," said Teresa Omondi, head of the Gender Violence Recovery Center at Nairobi Women's Hospital.

A report this month by gender-violence center sounded the alarm, saying "There is already great fear that the gains made to reduce the prevalence of HIV in Kenya would be lost." Kenya's National AIDS Control Council also has launched a study into the effects of the violence, when gang rapes and other sexual crimes were reported.

Several young prostitutes interviewed by the AP said they were having sex without condoms to gain customers now that so many more girls are on the streets.

"We use condoms most of the time," said Milka Muthoni, 17, who was nearly finished with secondary school when she dropped out this year. "I know it's a risky business. At times I have gone to the hospital with injuries and venereal diseases. But I have no other options."

Milka, who also lives in Eldoret, said her parents kicked her out when they learned she was a prostitute.

But now, she says, "I have been shopping for them so they no longer ask me where I get the money from."

Government spokesman Alfred Mutua did not immediately return calls for comment Thursday.

The bloodshed following Kenya's disputed presidential vote on December 27 marked some of the darkest times since Kenya's independence from Britain in 1963. Much of the fighting degenerated into riots and ethnic fighting that exposed deep divisions over land and economic inequality.

A power-sharing deal between President Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, who was named to the new post of prime minister under the deal, ended much of the killing six months ago. But Kenya lost up to \$1 billion because of the turmoil, a long-term blight even as the economy improves and foreign tourists hit the country's famous Indian Ocean beaches again.

Tens of thousands of children drop out of school, unable to pay fees

Meanwhile, thousands of Kenyans remain displaced from their homes after fleeing communities that turned on them. Untold numbers of children have not returned to class or have dropped out because they cannot afford school fees after their parents were killed or lost their jobs.

Musau Ndunda, chairman of the Kenya National Association of Parents, said 40,000 secondary school students were out of school in February, the last figures available. He believes many remain out of school or simply dropped out again.

For Janet, returning to Kiambaa Primary School was not an option -- it burned to the ground in the violence.

She had been living in Eldoret's vast displacement camp for a month when she noticed that her friend, Nyambura, always had food and neat clothes, even though she was living in the camp, too. Nyambura confided that she had been selling herself -- and invited Janet along to the pub the next night.

"I was reluctant but Nyambura convinced me that the men would pay us," Janet said. "I had never even had alcohol before, but I was desperate for money so I followed my friend."

She was paid 1,000 Kenya shillings -- about \$18 -- and used the money to buy food for her parents and six siblings back at the camp. Now, she tells her family she has a job in town, but they don't ask her specifics.

"My parents were poor even before the violence, they could not afford everything we needed," she said. "Now that I'm on the streets, on good days, I get up to 2,000 Kenya shilling (nearly \$40) after sleeping with five or six men."

She has no hope of returning to school. Her parents remain out of work, and Janet's contributions are vital to her family's survival.

"At first, this job was torture to me," Kimani said. "Sleeping with these men is terrible, and sometimes they are rough and hurt me. But with time, I have gotten used to it."

Prostitution has long been a problem in Kenya, particularly on the tourist-friendly coast.

'Adults are preying on these kids'

Agnetta Mirikau, a child protection specialist with UNICEF Kenya, said the increase is particularly noticeable now in towns where the violence was the worst, such as Eldoret, Naivasha and Nakuru. Eldoret was the site of one of the most horrific attacks after the election, when a mob torched a church filled with people seeking shelter, killing dozens.

"Adults are now preying on these kids," Mirikau said. "People have no income, children have been displaced and they want to help supplement their parents' income. If there is no food to eat and they're responsible for their siblings they go out and make money for food."

Eldoret Mayor Sammy Rutto recently ordered police to crack down on prostitution after hearing girls as young as 12 were spotted in bars.

"This is a business we cannot allow," he said. "They have to find alternative means of survival. This prostitution will definitely lead to an increase in the spread of AIDS, and many parents will lose their children."

The Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement

Acts 8:4-17

New Section / Power – 3000 – 5000 – Stephen / Scattered – Launching / to ends of Earth

We are in a new section of this wonderful and inspiring book. The Church waited for the power from on high that would make them witnesses there in Jerusalem; and we have studied through that mighty work as we seen 3,000 saved on the Day of Pentecost, another 5,000 after the lame man is healed and Peter preaches at the Temple, and then just finished seeing Stephen preach boldly and faithfully, ending his life for “His” witness. The resultant is that a man name Saul is going to bring havoc upon the church, going from house to house to kill or beat the Believer’s – but little does Saul know that he is launching the Church into the spreading of Gospel, just as Jesus said, to Judea and Samaria, which is the next step on the way to the end of the earth, until the end of the earth.

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Last Study – Saw the Jesus Movement / This Study the Jesus Way

In our last study we saw the Jesus movement as nothing can or ever will stop the Jesus Movement, even as man (like a Saul persecuting the church) thinks they may be stopping or crushing the Jesus Movement, we saw that they are only pawns/instruments in God’s hand to further the Gospel, and we will see that even more defined in our passage today. So we continue to see the Jesus Movement, and today along with the Jesus Movement we will see the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement, and my friend, that way specifically and expectantly involves you.

So let’s read verses 1-3 for context, and then pick it up in verse 4.

(Acts 8:1 NKJV) **Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.**

(Acts 8:2 NKJV) **And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him.**

(Acts 8:3 NKJV) **As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.**

Paul Voting – Sanhedrin / Above Blood – but Something Happens /

Was Paul actually a thrower of stones? No, but we do read that Saul cast his vote (consenting – Acts 8:1) for the stoning (thus why we can believe that Saul was a voting member of the Sanhedrin. We read in Acts 7:58 that the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. This brilliant young theologian would vote for Stephen’s death, but he was above bloodying his own hands to bring it about. And yet something happens as we read the story, for later in the Book of Acts, we’ll see Paul use his own hands to drag men and women out of their homes in order to imprison and persecute them.

This Haunt him - Widows – Orphans / Thought doing Big Favor / Word of Warning

This would haunt him all of his days—so much so that he would write about it to his young protégé, Timothy, calling himself a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an injurious person (1 Timothy 1:13). In Romans 15, Paul wrote that wherever he went he raised money for the poor saints in Jerusalem. No doubt, whenever he walked through the streets of Jerusalem and saw a wife sitting without her husband, or a man without his wife—he would be reminded of the results of his radical and relentless persecution. I find this to be a word of warning to us personally. We can think we're doing the Lord a big favor by coming down on people, beating up on people, or pointing our finger at people—all in the name of “purifying the church” or “taking a stand for righteousness.” But what a shock it must have been for Paul on the road to Damascus when he finally realized that all of the time he thought he was doing God a favor, he was actually persecuting His Son. Be careful. Remember Saul when you feel like going from house to house pointing out sinners or finding fault with preachers. Like PSul, we can be radical—but we can be radically wrong.

1 Timothy 1:13 (NKJV) ¹³although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

Romans 15:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵But now I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the saints. ²⁶For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem.

Phillip Preaches Christ in Samaria

(Acts 8:4 NKJV) Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Everybody Scattered but Apostles / It is Jesus Movement – move only if Jesus Allows

Again, ever wonder why everybody was scattered but the Apostles. Because it is the Jesus Movement, and no one is moved unless Jesus allows them to be moved; no one is moved unless Jesus moves them. The Apostles don't move because they are the headquarters, they are the beachfront, and the Lord has them remain in place so every believer see the headquarters is established, the flag has been planted on the hilltop, and when one looks to Jerusalem, the flag, the Church is still standing, no matter the attacks of the enemy. The Apostles remaining in Jerusalem is a true miracle, and everyone would know it, for they would know that Saul's first plan of attack is to kill the heart, and the body will die – but he can't, for it is the Jesus Movement. *(Acts 8:1 NKJV) Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

Scattered – Diaspora / Seeds planted in New Soil

The word used here for “scattered” is “diaspora”, and it means to “cast seed”. The believers in Jerusalem were God's seed and the persecution was used of God to plant them in new soil so they could bear fruit:

Matthew 13:37-38 (NKJV) ³⁷He answered and said to them: “*He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man.*” ³⁸*The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

Scattering brought Furtherance – Jesus Movement / Not Satan Move / Remember Next Move

Scattering brought the furtherance/spreading of the gospel, because it is the Jesus Movement, not Satan's movement. Jesus is calling the shots, not Satan, remember that in your life when you are told that the company is downsizing, when this university will accept you, but the other one won't, or when this job opens up, but the other one says no (even though that is one that you really wanted. Remember that you military folks when your next duty assignment comes in.

Important – Remember Why / To Preach the Word

Remember that, but as important, remember why - *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.* Do you notice we don't read that they were scattered and complained everywhere they went for having to leave their homeland, but they scattered and preached Christ everywhere they went. We are seeing quite possibly the largest missionary send-off in the history of the church.

I've met Plenty People who have Moved / Not Realize the "Why" / They Loved Jerusalem

I've met many a people who have been scattered abroad, some have taken jobs here in this area who use to live in some real beautiful places and went to some real great churches in this country, but when they come here to this area they just hated it. They missed their social activities, they missed their church, and I can understand how hard that is (because I've been there) – but what I have found in every case, of those people who basically all they ever did was complain (or be depressed) about where they where, who talk about how they long be where they once were, what I have found (bar none), is that in all those cases, those people never engaged in the spreading of the Gospel. They never came to the realization that they were scattered by God, and that God scattered them for the furtherance of the Gospel. I bet if ya asked any of the people who were scattered in verse 4, they would have said they loved living in Jerusalem, they loved living in the City of God, they loved seeing the sun bouncing off the Temple, they loved being in the center of the religion, they loved being close to family, and they loved their familiar surroundings. I'm sure they loved where they were at, but what we read here is that when they were scattered, we don't read of complaining or depression, but of proclaiming and power – as the Gospel went into Judea and Samaria.

If you Get Scattered – Remember Why / Embrace it – Enjoy It

If you get scattered someday down the road, when your seed has settled from being scattered, may you always be reminded of why you were scattered (for the furtherance of the Gospel), embrace it and enjoy it.

Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement

It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

Reminded Israel given Ok to Return from Babylon

Before moving on from that thought, I am reminded of the Children of Israel as they were given the ok to return from captivity in Babylon by Cyrus to rebuild the Temple, but sadly it was estimated that there was well over 1 million of them now living in Babylon, only 49,000 of them chose to return, to leave the comforts of the homes and business they had built and established in Babylon (a sad indictment against those who were called God's chosen). But for the 49K that do return, the first thing they do when they get back to Jerusalem was to build an altar, and observe the Feast of Passover.

Before Constructing – Erected an Altar

Before they began constructing the temple or securing the city, the leaders of Israel built an altar. I like that! "That's not practical," some might have protested. "You should build the building first or make sure you're safe before you get too spiritual, get your houses and business established first." But we know that, as we seek first the kingdom, everything else will be added to us (Matthew 6:33). Too many people get it reversed, they want to establish their job, fix up their home, get the kids plugged into the extra-curricular activities, and then build the altar. What happens, and they don't know it, is that the when the spiritual things suffer, so does everything. Seek first the Kingdom! Also, notice they did in the morning and the evening this time at the altar, Beloved \bBegin your day by opening its door with devotions. And in the evening, lock it shut with a time of prayer, praise, and worship, and see how everything else falls into place. Get into you new place and build your altar before you build on anything else.

***Ezra 3:1-4 (NKJV)** ¹And when the seventh month had come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered together as one man to Jerusalem. ²Then Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and his brethren, arose and built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings on it, as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God. ³Though fear had come upon them because of the people of those countries, they set the altar on its bases; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, both the morning and evening burnt offerings. ⁴They also kept the Feast of Tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings in the number required by ordinance for each day.*

(Acts 8:5 NKJV) Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them.

2 Kings – Assyrian Invasion 721 BC / Assyrians Moved in Samaria (N. Israel) / Half-breeds
Second Kings 17 gives the account of the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 721 B.C., when the ten northern tribes were carried into captivity before the Assyrians claimed the northern part of Israel. As they moved into the area, the Assyrians married the impoverished Jews who were left behind, and a half-breed race was produced known as the Samaritans. The Jews in the south looked down on the Samaritans, calling them half-breeds and dogs, and went out of their way to avoid any contact with them. That is why it would have been shocking to hear Jesus say, “I must need go through Samaria” (see John 4:4).

John 4:4 (NKJV) ⁴But He needed to go through Samaria.

God uses your Past / Grecian Names – Not Pure Jews

Oh yea, by the way, God uses your past, he uses your likes, to reach people today who are where you were once at. The 7 men selected to wait tables, all Grecian names, not Jewish names, meaning they were probably not of pure Jewish descent and lineage, and now here we see them being dispersed. So here Phillip is with a Grecian name, a mixed name, a mixed man, going to a mixed people. God is always working and planning long before we ever had a thought about it. That is what our Shepherd does, He goes before us, as He leads us, and as only He can, at the same time He is behind us protecting our backside – He is simply marvelous. So, don't be surprised when you take this big huge step of faith, and find out that God had already been there and preparing months or years before you got there; and in the same thought, don't be afraid to step out and be men and woman of faith (devout – risk takers), because you should know – He's already been there, long before you get there, preparing the place for you. Why he will take your sports background, your Harley background, your educational, your hobby, your ancestry, your economic status, and all those things and use them to reach and connect to people.

Acts 6:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

Jesus Way of Jesus Movement

It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

(Acts 8:6 NKJV) And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did.

(Acts 8:7 NKJV) For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed.

(Acts 8:8 NKJV) And there was great joy in that city.

Phillip – Waiting Tables – Hosting a Crusade

Phillip was one of the seven, and we see again the dynamic principle of being faithful in the little things, God will use you in greater ways. Like Stephen, he goes from waiting on tables, to hosting a crusade in a foreign land. This is the first crusade of the New Testament, the first mission outreach of the new church. Never this enough, a person will never be too small for God to use, but they can be too big (in that they refuse to do the little things because they thing to highly of themselves).

Matthew 25:21 (NKJV) ²¹His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

How Interesting God is Dispersing Others / Help the New Beleivers / Teach the 4 Pillars

How interesting it is to me that God is dispersing His people to Samaria, for the Gospel is to go beyond Jerusalem, unto Judea and Samaria, and God sends a forerunner into the land (Phillip). So many of the people being dispersed who end up in Samaria, will end up being the follow-up counselors in this great crusade. They were saved and matured (taught) in Jerusalem, and now they are the mature believers (even if some were only saved for a few months, or others a few

years) who will help these new believers grow. What will they teach them, I would say Acts 2:42, they will tell these new believers, stay steadfast in the Word, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread (communion), and prayer. They would teach them the 4 pillars for the faith – and any person who stays steadfast, faithful in these 4 things, will always remain strong. Again, maybe the Jerusalem believers being dispersed were only saved themselves for a few months, but they still could be used by God, because had more knowledge than the ones just now getting saved in Samaria – so as God would use them, God will do the same with you. Impart the wisdom of the 4 pillars, telling them to read the Word, if possible offer to read it with them, pray with them (can you pray), fellowship with them (be there for them just to keep them from drifting back into the world, and being there for them as many of their friends abandon them for turning to Christ, and break bread with them, continually take them back to Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

(Acts 2:42 NKJV) And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Great Joy – When Part of others Lives

Verse 8 - And there was great joy in that city – you betcha! Christian, be part of someone's joy!

Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement

It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

Simon the Sorcerer

(Acts 8:9 NKJV) But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great,

(Acts 8:10 NKJV) to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God."

(Acts 8:11 NKJV) And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorceries for a long time.

Sorcery – Art of Magic

This word for sorcery means “the art of magic”; it is not the word sorcery that refers to the calling of the spiritual realm. So we have a David Copperfield here.

(Acts 8:12 NKJV) But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.

Phillip has full-on Revival / Christian Life anything but Boring / Jesus Way – Jesus Move

Phillip got a full-on revival going on here, how exciting this must have been to watch and see people getting saved. You will never top that excitement in your life, anyone who tells me the Christian life is boring, I tell them that is their fault, for the Christian life is anything but boring when you are doing it God's way. The Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement.

(Acts 8:13 NKJV) Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Let's Establish – He Believed / Question Simon – have to Question Others

Simon is the context for the next several verses, so let's establish this up front, and that is that the passage says that Simon believed. The word used here for “believe” is the same one that was used, with the centurion believing, the blind man believing and seeing, and the little children believing – so if we question Simon's belief, we should then also question these others belief.

Matthew 8:13 (NKJV) ¹³*Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.*

Matthew 9:28 (NKJV) ²⁸*And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”*

Matthew 18:6 (NKJV) *“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

We see a New Believer / Amazed at Miracles he Sees / Real Thing compared to Worked Up

So here we have a believer, a new believer at that, and Simeon is totally amazed as he watches Phillip performing signs and wonders. Simon has done and seen some amazing things, he is a magician so great people thought he was a god we have just read, but even he is amazed by what he is seeing done through Phillip. The “Real Thing” is always a million-fold greater than the worked-up thing. That applies if you are looking for love, the worked-up love of the world is nothing to the real thing, the love of Jesus Christ for He is the Real Thing. An exciting life, all the excitement of the world is dull when a person fully grasps and grabs onto the real thing, the life in Christ. The spiritual things of God will always blow away the material things of this world. I never left the East Coast of the United States until I got saved, then I found myself preaching on the streets in Russia shortly after the walls came down, then in the Ukraine, then in Mexico, Europe, Nicaragua. Being on the radio, YouTube videos preaching Christ – my life in Christ has totally blown away all that I ever saw in the world, and I guarantee the same for you.

(Acts 8:14 NKJV) Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,

Notice Saw signs – but Received the Word / The Word will endure Forever

Notice, they saw signs and wonders, but it was the word that they received. Signs and wonders will come and go, but the word of God remains forever:

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV) *³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

Foundational Principle – Follow-up After Decision / School of Discipleship – Perfect balance

Peter and John come down from Jerusalem. Here is a foundational principle for all churches today, and that is do discipleship follow-up after a decision for Christ is made. Send mature believers to disciple the young/new believers. We here at Calvary Chapel Anne Arundel County have our School of Discipleship and Ministry, and I believe it has a perfect balance to it. We thoroughly ground every believer (new or old) in the Word of God, and we have Mentor to help them along the way, keep them in focus, and guard them as Satan is trying to pick them off before they get rooted deep. But equally important is that upon completion the student, then becomes a mentor. I believe we see the perfect application of the matured believer coming to strengthen the newer believer’s right here in this passage.

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV) *¹You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

Become a Mentor – Take your Maturity and become a Peter or John to Someone

Maybe you already feel that you are steeped in the word, and would gain little of going through the School of Discipleship, then I ask you then to take that maturity and be like Peter and John, and head to Samaria to minister to those who have just received the word – become a mentor, either to someone in this fellowship or at one of the 2 local prisons we are connected with. However, our requirement is that to be a mentor you have to have gone through the classroom side of the School, we need to all be on the same page. But I’ll tell you this, I have gone through the Chuck Tapes 2 times from Genesis – Revelation, and another time from Matthew – Revelation, and each time I find myself realizing more and more, just how little I know the Bible. You will grow in your knowledge of the Word – I guarantee it. The Inductive Bible Study Method, I’ve gone through that 3 times now, have taught it 3 times myself, and have found myself gleaning the word better and better every time I go through it. The 9 devotion books, I wish I could read each of them at least once a year they are so rich and powerful. The Way of Evangelism course, I’ve taught how to evangelize to hundreds of people, wrote a booklet on it (called the 5 P’s) – trained students on it at the Bible College, converted into Spanish and taught multiple times and places in Latin America, and I’ll tell ya, I’ll read a whole book (8 hours) to gain one golden nugget that will make me more powerful in my witness, not to mention just plain ole get me excited about

witnessing from being around others with a like passion (iron sharpens iron). You will not lose by going through the School of Discipleship, I guarantee it, in fact we offer a full money back guarantee if you are not completely satisfied at the end (of course we offer the whole course free of charge).

Proverbs 27:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ *As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*

It's the Jesus Way of Jesus Movement

It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

(Acts 8:15 NKJV) who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 8:16 NKJV) For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 8:17 NKJV) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

We have seen the 3 Prepositions

Remember we have studied early here in the Book of Acts, the three workings of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit alongside of someone (the Greek preposition "para") testifying to the person their sin and the need for the Savior", then (preposition "en") meaning to take up residence within the person once they ask Jesus to forgive their sins and come into their lives, and then the third, (preposition "heppi") which means upon, in the filling to overflowing of the Holy Spirit in a person's life for the work of the ministry. So we see all three here in this account in Samaria.

Also the Different Baptisms spoken of in the Scriptures

So we see here there are different baptisms:

- there is the *water baptism* (a picture of identifying with Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and the believer is burying the old man, and being born anew to follow after God and His ways).
- Then there is the *baptism into Christ*, where God takes up residence with the person, and the person is received into the body of Christ.
- And then there is *baptism of the Holy Spirit* to receive the power (dynamis) for the work of the ministry (the theme of this Book of Acts):

Baptism with Water:

(Acts 8:38 NKJV) *So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.*

Baptism of Indwelling of God in Us

John 20:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, *"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."*

²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, *"Receive the Holy Spirit."*

1 Cor 3:16 (NKJV) *Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

Baptism of Power

(Acts 1:5 NKJV) *"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Dispels a lot of Errancy

So this passage dispels that doctrine and belief that a person gets the gifts of the Holy Spirit the moment they are saved, or the moment they come out of the water, we see that a person can get saved, and then at a separate time receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit for the works of the ministry. Lots of people put lots of people on this trip that they should be speaking in tongues when they immerse out of the water during baptism, or that they didn't receive the Holy Spirit (indwelling of God) if they weren't water baptized, and thus they aren't saved if they aren't baptized, and we see clearly in this chapter those are just purely errant doctrine.

Why didn't Phillip Lay Hands / Unity – Linkage – Wasn't Gifted / Body Working Together

Why didn't Philip lay his hands on the Samaritans to receive the power of the Spirit?

I suggest two possible reasons. In sending for Peter and John, the “Big Guns in Jerusalem,” Philip was linking the Samaritan Christians to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. He was not starting a separate movement in Samaria nor a distinct denomination of believers. They were all one body. Sending for Peter and John verified the linkage and support between the believers in Jerusalem and those in Samaria. But a second and more important reason may have been that perhaps Philip wasn't gifted in that way. Although he was gifted in preaching and in evangelism, it is possible he was not gifted in the laying on of hands for the empowering of people. Wise enough to realize that a couple of his brothers had that anointing, that gifting, that calling—he sent for them. Again we see the importance of the body working together. No one person can do it all. No one person should do it all. Every part of the body has a specific role to play. It's so relaxing when you finally realize you don't have to do it all. People around you might expect you to be everything for them, but you know you're not and can't be. So what should you do? Do what you're called to do and let a brother or a sister do those things you haven't been gifted or called to do. The Lord's burden is not heavy. His yoke fits perfectly (Matthew 11:29).

Matthew 11:29-30 (NKJV) ²⁹*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”*

Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement

It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

Not the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement

Acts 8:18-25

New Section / Power – 3000 – 5000 – Stephen / Scattered – Launching / to ends of Earth

We are in a new section of this wonderful and inspiring book. The Church waited for the power from on high that would make them witnesses there in Jerusalem; and we have studied through that mighty work as we seen 3,000 saved on the Day of Pentecost, another 5,000 after the lame man is healed and Peter preaches at the Temple, and then just finished seeing Stephen preach boldly and faithfully, ending his life for “His” witness. The resultant is that a man name Saul is going to bring havoc upon the church, going from house to house to kill or beat the Believer’s – but little does Saul know that he is launching the Church into the spreading of Gospel, just as Jesus said, to Judea and Samaria, which is the next step on the way to the end of the earth, until the end of the earth (to a bunch of people in Anne Arundel County).

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Last Study – Saw the Jesus Movement / This Study the Jesus Way

In our study two weeks ago we saw the Jesus movement as nothing can or ever will stop the Jesus Movement, even as man (like a Saul persecuting the church) thinks they may be stopping or crushing the Jesus Movement, we saw that they are only pawns/instruments in God’s hand to further the Gospel. Then in our last study saw the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement and that is that God couples His Holy Spirit with people to work in the lives others.

Pick up Verse 18 / Reminder – Havoc, Follow-up Counselors, Phillip Crusade / Simon

We will pick up in verse 18, and as a way of a reminder for context, Saul is making havoc upon the church in Jerusalem, the church is scattering to Judea and Samaria, which in reality turns out that God is just sending follow-up counselors for Phillip’s harvest Crusade as we see tons of people getting saved and baptized after Phillip’s preaching. One such person who believed and got baptized was a man named Simon, who was a master magician, so much so that people thought him to be a god.

(Acts 8:13 NKJV) *Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.*

Let’s Establish – He Believed / Question Simon – have to Question Others

Again, let’s establish this, and that is that verse 13 says that Simon believed. The word used there for “believe” is the same one that was used, with the centurion believing, the blind man believing and seeing, and the little children believing – so if we question Simon’s belief, we should then also question these others belief. It is the same word used for believe that Jesus uses in John 3:16. It says he believed, and so I take it that he believed, I think the Scriptures were meant to be simple, and so I take as such, says he believed, he believed. So that is our context, he believed.

(Acts 8:13 NKJV) *Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.*

Matthew 8:13 (NKJV) ¹³*Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.” And his servant was healed that same hour.*

Matthew 9:28 (NKJV) ²⁸And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord."

Matthew 18:6 (NKJV) ⁶"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

(Acts 8:18 NKJV) And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money,
(Acts 8:19 NKJV) saying, "Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

Simon Confused Work God – Previous Magic

Verse 13 indicates that Simon was a believer; however, he confused the work of God with his previous magical practices. Because others had paid him for the secrets of his magic (as still is the practice today), he may have simply thought that this was the best way to approach Peter.

New Believer / Merge World ways – Kingdom Ways / Reprogrammed – Easy Apply Old Ways

What we have here is a new believer, trying to merge his worldly ways into the Kingdom ways. I can relate to Simon as I was very much guilty of the same when I first got saved and still have to be on guard about it still today. In fact I've said it often, that for the first 6 months I was saved, the only two people who knew it was me and God, because I kept doing many of the things I had previously done before I was saved. I was totally committed to the Lord, clearly understood the gospel, but was very immature. But God's Word kept pouring in, and change began to happen. How we need to be reprogrammed once we are saved, not just in our actions, but in the way we think, for how easy it is for us to try to apply all those years of worldly wisdom and ways into God's ways.

Examples Today

I think all of us can be a Simon at times, trying to merge what we have learned or experienced in the world into our Christian walk.

- How many churches today hire marketing company to help them with the demographics of an area to determine where best to plant the next church, rather than seeking the Lord on where He wants to work next.
- How many churches hire professional fund raising firms to help them raise money, which most always involve pressure tactics, guilt trips, emotional pricks at the heart, and of course the dreaded "pledge card", rather than simply teaching the Biblical principles of tithing, and then simply trusting in the Lord to provide.
- There are churches today that you can't tell if you are at rock concert or a church because they make the service all about entertaining and tickling the person's ears rather than simply letting the "Word of God being living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword (Heb 4:12).
- How many pastors use their charisma and personality over the Holy Spirit to wow the people from the pulpit – just warming their hearts, never warning their hearts.
- How about individually, sure I trust the Lord to bring me a mate, a soul-mate for life as she jumps into her second-story blue jeans (because they are so tight it takes that much momentum to get into them, or the shirt she bought in the pre-teen department. Rather than letting her inner-beauty capture a man's heart, she uses worldly capture method of the flesh.
- Men can do the same, just in different ways with their athletic prowess, or artistic talents, financial success, or the likes.

- Some men or woman will use sex to keep the person they want, because there isn't enough there spiritually for the other person to want to stay, so they trap them with sex, because they watch it work so well in the movies and television.
- How many people go to psychiatrists before they go to their Bibles.
- How many people apply worldly pressure tactics unto people to get what they want rather than saying, "Lord let your will be done."

Simon tries to Apply Worldly Mentality / Peter brings Clearly – Not the Jesus Way

Simon tries to apply his worldly mentality into the Kingdom business; this is how it works in the world, therefore this is how it must work in the church. Peter doesn't mix words when he brings correction to Simon, for Peter is going to bring total clarity to "Not the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement."

(Acts 8:20 NKJV) But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

(Acts 8:21 NKJV) "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

(Acts 8:22 NKJV) "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

(Acts 8:23 NKJV) "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

(Acts 8:24 NKJV) Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

What we Read here is Not the Jesus Way / Clear for all People all Time

What we read here is "Not the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement". It is not world wisdom applied to Kingdom business and Peter makes it clear for all people for all times, leave the world wisdom and ways in the world, you are a new creation, and you need to learn how to do things the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement.

This Passage Real Example of Peter's Epistle / By Holy Spirit – Zech 4:6

This passage of Scripture is just a wonderful embodiment, a living real example of Peter's two epistles. Here we see Peter in the total Pastor/Shepherd role. The Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement is the coupling of the Holy Spirit with a man or woman of God. God doesn't need us, but chooses to use us. Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit says the Lord! The Holy Spirit is moving, and Simon's way is an instant quenching of the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 4:6 (NKJV) ⁶So he answered and said to me:

*"This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel:
'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,'
Says the LORD of hosts.*

Loud & Clear Message – It is Acts of the Holy Spirit / Annals – Now Simon

Peter sends a loud and clear message to all people then, for all people now, it is by the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit only, for it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit. As clear as a message he sent to Annals and Sapphira about hypocrisy back in chapter 5, he sends as loud a message here in chapter 8, in all that you do, do it the God Way, the Jesus Way – I wonder if Peter was thinking of Simon when he wrote:

1 Peter 4:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. ¹¹If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Peter saying – Simon put off Old Man

Simon you can't buy it, it is a gift, and God gives it as He sees fit. Peter is saying Simon you need to put off the old man, you have to quit thinking the way of the old man, and start thinking the way of the new man. I wonder if Peter was thinking of Simon when he wrote:

1 Peter 1:13-16 (NKJV) ¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former

lusts, as in your ignorance; ¹⁵but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."

1 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) ¹Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, ²as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, ³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Pastoral Example – Counsel / Anything comes against Move – Crush It

Peter gives pastoral example here in this passage, and gives pastoral counsel in his epistle, that we pastors (shepherds) and that includes you mom and dad who shepherd you flock, that when anything that comes up against the work that God is doing through His Holy Spirit in the lives of our flock, we must deal with it aggressively and fully. Simon could have quenched the whole revival that was flowing through Samaria, if people would have thought that it was anything other than the work of God, something that was man-made, the whole revival would have died right there (oh just another phony television evangelist). And so too it is, and we must be, that if someone or something want to or tries to quench the work and move of God in the lives of our flock by inducing the things or mentality of the world. To all you shepherds here is what Peter writes to you, and I wonder if he was thinking of Simon and this moment when he wrote it:

1 Peter 5:1-4 (NKJV) ¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; ³nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; ⁴and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.

2 Peter 2:1-22 (NKJV) ¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber. ⁴For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; ⁵and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ⁶and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; ⁷and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked ⁸(for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)— ⁹then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries, ¹¹whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring a reviling accusation against them before the Lord. ¹²But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, ¹³and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions while they feast with you, ¹⁴having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. They have a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. ¹⁵They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; ¹⁶but he was rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet. ¹⁷These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. ¹⁸For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. ¹⁹While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. ²⁰For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. ²¹For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. ²²But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

Sounds Harsh – Greatest words of Love / Repent – on Course for Destruction

Not only is Peter shepherding the flock of God, but as harsh as his words may sound, they are the greatest words of love that Simon can hear, "repent, turn from your way of thinking, for you are on a course for destruction".

(Acts 8:20 NKJV) But Peter said to him, "Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!

(Acts 8:21 NKJV) "You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.

Let's Establish – He Believed / Question Simon – have to Question Others

Again, let's establish this, and that is that verse 13 says that Simon believed. The word used there for "believe" is the same one that was used, with the centurion believing, the blind man believing and seeing, and the little children believing – so if we question Simon's belief, we should then also question these others belief. It is the same word used for believe that Jesus uses in John 3:16.

(Acts 8:13 NKJV) Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.

Matthew 8:13 (NKJV) ¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.

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Matthew 18:6 (NKJV) ⁶"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Real Example Professing Believer – Later Warned of Perishing / Clearly word for Hell

So here is a real-life Bible example of someone who professes to be a believer, it is noted that he is a believer, but is later warned that he is perishing. This word for perishing is clearly the word for perishing as in eternal damnation. It is the same word Jesus used in Matthew 7 when he spoke of the broad way that leads to destruction, it is the same word that is used that speaks of Satan (the Son of Perdition), and it is the same word that Peter uses in his epistles that speak of destruction:

Matthew 7:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

John 17:12 (NKJV) ¹²While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.

2 Peter 2:1-3 (NKJV) ¹But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. ²And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed. ³By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.

2 Peter 3:7 (NKJV) ⁷But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Peter 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures.

Peter telling Simon going to Hell / Doesn't matter if Baptized / Life doesn't Line-Up

Make no doubt here, Peter is telling Simon you are perishing to hell – regardless of what you profess and say you believe, you have no part in this matter (that is the Kingdom of God), doesn't matter if you were baptized, you are perishing because you are filled with bitterness and bound by iniquity. Peter is saying your life does not line up with your profession. Peter is being a good Pastor, but a better brother in Christ, by telling Simon he needs to examine his heart for his thoughts and actions are not lining up with salvation. Peter would pen in his epistle, and I wonder if he had Simon in mind when he wrote these words (Make your call and election sure):

2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Right to Stir People Up

Peter says that it is right for him to stir up people, so they are always examining their thoughts and actions and how they line up with salvation. I wonder if he had Simon in mind when he wrote these words:

2 Peter 1:12-15 (NKJV) ¹²For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. ¹³Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, ¹⁴knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. ¹⁵Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.

Is Peter saying lost Salvation / Armenian – Multi-personality Disorder / Calvinist Passages

Is Peter saying that Simon lost his salvation, I don't know (those things are too high for me).

Those that believe you can lose your salvation love 2 Peter 1:10, they love the story of Simon.

But if Peter was an Armenian (one who believes you can lose your salvation), then he must have had some great conversations with himself, for he would seem to have multiple personalities, for he would also write some passages that the Calvinist love (those who believe once saved always saved):

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NKJV) ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an **inheritance** incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved** in heaven for you, ⁵who **are kept** by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹But you are a **chosen** generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

1 Peter 5:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰But may the God of all grace, **who called** us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

What Application / Split – make 2 Denominations / Ignorance-Secure / Fear-Worry

What is the application then to all this, is it a church split and make two denominations? Is it to spend hours upon hours discussing and debating? Is it to sit in ignorance thinking something is secure while it is really perishing? Is it to sit in fear and worry? The Scriptures are simple, God keeps it simple, for we are quite frankly just simple people – Verse 22, repent! The application, the action, is not to debate it, but to repent – then case is closed, the discussion and the debate becomes a mute point.

(Acts 8:22 NKJV) "Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.

(Acts 8:23 NKJV) "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity."

Followed & Baptized – but Bitter / Bitter #2 Now / Bitterness only hurts You

Verse 23 - "For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity." - Now, though he had followed Philip and was a great admirer of the works that he was doing, yet within in his heart there was the gall of bitterness. Probably bitter over the fact that he was no longer looked up to by the people as he had once been. Bitter over the fact that the people were now following a new leader, even Jesus Christ, whom Philip had declared unto them. And that his little crowd had turned from him unto another, and that bothered him deep down in his heart. Though outwardly he was there with Philip and followed Philip and was baptized. Inwardly it was eating away. The bond of iniquity, the gall of bitterness. What a terrible thing bitterness is. How sad it is that a person would harbor bitterness in their heart. Bitterness can only hurt you. It only does you harm. You really can't afford bitterness. And he was told, "Pray that God might forgive you of this, for down in your heart you have bitterness, the bond of iniquity."

3 Hairs / Attitude is Everything

There once was a woman who woke up one morning, looked in the mirror, and saw that she had only three hairs on her head. "Great," she said, "I think I'll braid my hair today." So she did, and had a wonderful day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and saw that she had only two hairs on her head. "Hmm," she said, "I guess I'll part my hair down the middle." So she did, and had a wonderful day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and saw that she had

only one hair left on her head. "Wow," she said, "today I get to wear my hair in a pony tail." So she did, and had a wonderful, wonderful day. The next day she woke up, looked in the mirror and saw that there wasn't a single hair on her head. "Thank God!" she exclaimed. "I was running out of things to do with my hair!" ATTITUDE is everything! Let's be grateful for the things God has given us and have a wonderful day!

***Psalms 34:1** I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*

I've Learned to be Content / Be Content – Singleness – Work / Bitterness will Destroy You

I consider every place that I am, to be the most blessed place to be because I believe that is exactly where God wants me to be. For example, speaking of ministry, I've learned to be content in all things, I meet pastor's all the time who seem frustrated where they are at in ministry, and I say hey praise the Lord, more people come more you can do in the community, less people come, then the more time to spend with them. Beloved be content where God has you in ministry, in singleness or marriage, at work or at play, and say this is where God has me, and I am going to enjoy it and make the most of it. Simon wasn't content that people were more amazed with Phillip's power than his now, and it ate him up inside, all the way to the point of destruction. Be careful of discontentment, it can turn into bitterness, and that bitterness can swallow you up.

***Philippians 4:11-13 (NKJV)** ¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

If Perhaps – Point of Fact / Linking 2 Points (Repentance – Asking) / Must do Both

Verse 22 - If perhaps – the wording makes it seem like you can ask to be forgiven, but God might not forgive you, for you have gone too far. Rejecting the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin, not lying to the Holy Spirit (Ananias and Shappiria), nor offering to purchase the Holy Spirit is the unpardonable sin. As the definition describes, "not perchance but making a point of fact". What we have here is a linking of two points, repentance, and request are the elements for forgiveness. Repentance means to turn away, pray means to ask. Turning from sin is great, but one must still confess it and ask for forgiveness. And asking for forgiveness while not turning away (repenting) will not bring forgiveness, the two must be linked together for forgiveness to be a "point of fact". It is not maybe you'll be forgiven, for Peter himself will write, God wishes that none should perish but all seek repentance. Confess and repent, repent and confess, and your sins will be forgiven (Acts 3:19 and 1 John 1:9).

***If perhaps** - denotes "if therefore," "if accordingly" (i.e., if in these circumstances), e.g., of Christ and the fig tree (not "if perchance," but marking a correspondence in point of fact).*

***2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)** ⁹The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*

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

***Acts 3:19 (NKJV)** ¹⁹Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,*

Can Confess all Want – No Repent – No Forgive

Beloved, you can confess all you want, but without repentance there is no forgiveness of sin (Acts 3:19), without a change in your actions you are simply speaking into the wind. Remember our prior study on devout men and woman of God and we saw that the definition of devout was "a person's actions followed what they believed".

Repent – Make Calling Sure / 1 John 2:3

Repent, make your calling and election sure. By this we know that we know Him, that we keep His commands:

***2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV)** ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

***1 John 2:3-6 (NKJV)** ³Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ⁵But whoever keeps His word, truly the*

love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. ⁶He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

Lots of World Ways – Not the Jesus Way / Want to Stop Jesus Movement / Crush It

There are lots of ways of the world that are not the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement. Do you want to stop the Jesus Movement in your life, I don't think so or you wouldn't be here, so we must all today examine all the ways of the flesh, and bring a crushing blow to them today. Not to go home and pray about them, for there is no need to pray about repentance; don't pray about repenting, Repent! The following must be crushed, in every form and fashion:

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revellies, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Ephesians 4:31 (NKJV) ³¹Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor ^εhomosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Stop at the Biggies / Must go On – Bitterness – Envy – Dissensions - Strife

Hey, we want to identify the "biggies" and once we overcome them we feel satisfied, yet the Lord is clearly saying don't stop there, you must go on and deliver the death blow to the following too; bitterness (that was Simon's sin), wrath, envy (that was Simon's sin), strife (Simon was on the verge of causing that in the Church by introducing errant doctrine – buy the Holy Spirit). I read that list and look at myself and say beware, for I may be beyond adultery and fornication, but these

(Acts 8:24 NKJV) Then Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me."

New Believer – Up to You / Don't Pray About Repenting - Repent

Here is the new believer and the immature believer, you pray for me, rather than I'll go pray for me. If someone else prays then the responsibility is off them. Don't pray about repenting, repent. Don't ask someone else to pray for you – you pray! I have told plenty of people plenty of times when they say pray for me (about something they've asked a hundred times about but won't repent), I say no, I'm not going to pray for you, it is time for you to repent.

God wants Change your Heart, Mind, Old way of Thinking

God wants to change your heart, He wants to change your mind, He wants to change you from your old way of thinking, and He wants to transform you.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) ¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

(Acts 8:25 NKJV) So when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

Easy to Read Passage – Fire & Brimstone

I think it easy and almost natural for us to read this account and read it as fire and brimstone teaching. J.B. Phillips' translation of this passage is (to hell with your money):

I Don't think So / I look at the Intersection (People and Places) / Clear Warning / Cross

But I really don't think so as I look at the thread, the intersection, of all the people and places involved in this story. It is clearly a warning to each individual to make their call and election sure, it is clearly a loud and clear statement to the church to not try to merge worldly ways into kingdom

business. But I see the message of the cross spoken so clearly here, and that is the message of forgiveness, restoration, and hope.

Intersection – the 2 Cross Beams

The intersection of the cross as the two beams cross, I see an intersection of people and places sending you and I a wonderful message of love again.

Simon stood before Peter and John in Samaria

Simon the magician stood before Peter, how Peter must have remember when he was once called Simon, how much alike they rally are. Simon the Magician, oh let me purchase this power. Simon Peter, the Mount of Transfiguration, oh Lord it is good that we are lets build three churches/tabernacles so people can come and pay homage to this moment, that is what the world does so should we. Oh Peter. Simon Peter in three days I must go to the cross, oh be it not so Lord I forbid it (Peter would say in man's wisdom), get behind thee Satan Jesus would say. Oh Lord, even if all will flee, not I, I will die if need be (cock-a-doodle-do).

Matthew 17:3-4 (NKJV) ³And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. ⁴Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

Matthew 16:21-23 (NKJV) ²¹From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

²²Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

²³But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

Simon make Calling Sure – God wants to Restore (it's a Point of Fact) / Peter Knew

Simon the Magician, make your calling and election sure, no matter what you are done the Lord is ready and wanting to restore you. It is not perhaps God will forgive you, but a "point of fact" He will if you will repent, and confess. I know says Simon Peter, He forgave and restored me, He will do the same for you.

2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Right John – Peter would say / Last time in Samaria / Jesus Rejected – not Give Up

Right John, Peter would say to the Apostle John. John would say oh yes it is a guarantee. The last time I was here in Samaria the whole people rejected Jesus, yet God never quit and condemned them forever, He waited for a time that they would be ready to receive Him, and that time is now. It was only a few years ago they rejected Him, these are the same people, but Jesus comes back because He doesn't give up on no one (remember that for that loved one or that city – Jesus never quits or gives up – and keeps coming back to them). Peter may have said, John tell Simon exactly what you said the last time you were here. Oh boy John would say shaking his looking down at the dirt (that was embarrassing). Yes I said Lord shall we call fire down from heaven upon them (that is mans wisdom and way). But Jesus didn't call fire down from heaven, and He didn't fire me from the ministry, because He gives up on no one, and through His Holy Spirit He can and will conform us and shape us into His very image.

Luke 9:51-56 (NKJV) ⁵¹Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵²and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. ⁵³But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

⁵⁴And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" ⁵⁵But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. ⁵⁶For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.

Everybody's Testimony / Don't know what Simon Did – Only we can Know Our Calling

Everybody's testimony is someone's story today. As Peter and John once were, Simon now is at this very moment. We really do not know what happened to Simon, and I think that is the point of the story, for it is a call to every person who professes Christ, make your call and election sure, for only you can know for sure, not anyone else looking on:

2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Simon – Know how God – Osmosis / Get Absorbed into Him – He into Us

Simon, you know how changes us, He does it, through osmosis's, yep as we walk and talk with Him, we get absorbed into Him, and He gets absorbed into us, we become just like Him, and as we are filled with this Holy Spirit, and we allow Him to control our lives, He that lives in us rises up to the surface of us, and He lives through us and we through Him.

Simon – Your ways not the Jesus Way / Leave World – Come wholly into Kingdom & Ways

Simon, your ways are not the Jesus Way of the Jesus Movement. Simon, Ray, Chris, Phil, the Church at Calvary Chapel of Anne Arundel County, leave the kingdom of this world, and come fully and wholly to His Kingdom, and His ways.

Romans 12:1-2 (NKJV) ¹I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. ²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Leading Others to Christ (8:26-40)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Working Way out of Jerusalem – to Ends of Earth / Leaving Samaria to Ethiopian

We are working our way out from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth. We are in Samaria as Phillip has quite the Harvest Crusade going on, and now God is going to call him to leave this great revival and head down to Gaza, a desert place, for a divine appointment with the Ethiopian eunuch.

Gospel to Ends of Earth – For Every Man / Table of Nations – Chp 8-10

The gospel will be preached to the end of the earth, until the end of the earth, and as important is that the Gospel is for every man, woman, and child on the face of the planet, whether they live on the African Continent, the European Continent, and where it all started there in the Mid-East. How interesting to me it is, that in chapters 8, 9, and 10 we find the record of three remarkable instances of conversion. I think that these three have been lifted out and given to us particularly for a lesson. In Genesis 10 we have recorded for us the "Table of Nations", and that Table is based on three lineages, the three sons of Noah: Ham, Shem, and Japheth. The descendants of Ham will settle in the African Continent, and in our study today we will see the Ethiopian eunuch from the African Continent give his life to Jesus. The descendants of Shem will settle there in the Mid-east, from the lineage of Shem will come the Messiah, through the Jewish race, and in chapter 9 we will see Saul (a Jew) give his life to the Lord. Then through Japheth, his descendants will settle in the European Continent, and in chapter 10 we will read of Cornelius, a Roman centurion give his life to the Lord.

God Proclaiming – Gospel for Everyone

So we see the gospel coming to all three sons of Noah. In these three chapters, and these three stories of conversions, the Gracious God is proclaiming to all men, woman, and children every in this world, that the Gospel is open for them, come and freely receive.

It is For You – Have you Received It

It is for you today, have you received it? If you have never made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, then I beseech that you will not leave this place today until you have received Him. The gospel is simple, yet simply profound, and that is that God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, but there is a problem and that is that your sin separates you from the Perfect and Holy, who can not allow sin into His presence, nor can He allow it to go unpunished, for just as man is punished for breaking man's law, God must punish man for breaking His Laws also (the 10 Commandments). But God does not want to leave you in that place of separation and eternal punishment, and therefore provided a way to punish sin, yet still provide a way for you to be forgiven, and to see His great love for you, and He did that through His only Son Jesus Christ, who traded places with you, and took the wrath/punishment of God that was do you for breaking God's Holy Law. Jesus took your place on the cross so that you might take the place of son and daughter in heaven. The gospel is for you today, have you received it? To so you must recognize and confess that you are a sinner and have broken God's Law, and you have offended

the Holy God. Secondly you must repent (turn away) from your sins. And then thirdly, ask Jesus to come into your heart and take control of your life.

Gospel for Everyone – This Passage is how to Present it / Title: Leading others to Christ

This Gospel is for everyone, and in our study today, we will see a classical example of how to lead someone to Christ as we watch Phillip being used by the Lord to bring this Ethiopian eunuch to salvation.

3 Factors Involved: Spirit – Word - Man

You will also notice from these examples that in a conversion three factors must be brought into focus before there can be a conversion. All three of these are evident in these three representative conversions.

- *The work of the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit had taken this man Philip to Samaria where there had been a great moving of the Spirit of God. Then the Holy Spirit moved him down to Gaza, and again we see His moving in the heart of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Spirit of God had gone ahead to prepare the heart and also to prepare the messenger.
- *The Word of God.* "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Word of God is the second essential. The Holy Spirit will take the things of Christ and will reveal them to an individual. It is the Spirit of God using the Word of God. But, wait a minute, there must be a human instrument.
- *The man of God.* The Spirit of God uses the man of God who delivers the Word of God to produce a son of God, one who is born again. We will see this in the record of the conversion of this Ethiopian eunuch.

1.) The Work of the Holy Spirit

Phillip Preaches to the Ethiopian

(Acts 8:26 NKJV) Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

(Acts 8:27 NKJV) So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship,

(Acts 8:28 NKJV) was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

(Acts 8:29 NKJV) Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."

(Acts 8:30 NKJV) So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

Holy Spirit Leading / Make Matter of Prayer – Holy Spirit Preparing / Talk Lord – Before Indv

The Holy Spirit had taken this man Philip to Samaria where there had been a great moving of the Spirit of God. Then the Holy Spirit moved him down to Gaza, and again we see His moving in the heart of the Ethiopian eunuch. The Spirit of God had gone ahead to prepare the heart and also to prepare the messenger. This leading of the Spirit of God is absolutely essential. I'm afraid that a great deal of personal work is done in a haphazard manner and without the leading of the Spirit of God. I believe that we ought to make it a matter of definite prayer before we talk to anyone. We should talk to the Lord about the individual before we talk to the individual about the Lord. It is not simply that we need the Holy Spirit to lead us. What we need is for the Spirit of God to go ahead of us and prepare the way, then to call us up to where He is. We want to go where the Spirit of God is moving. This is the first essential in a conversion. We find it true in the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch and also in the conversion of Saul and of Cornelius.

The Ice-breaker (what Reading) / Hard to get Conversation Rolling / My Ice-breakers

Also, do you notice Phillip with the ice-breaker, so do you understand what you are reading. If you are scared to evangelize, sometimes it is just the ice-breaker that is lacking. You know what

to say once the conversation is rolling, you know how to present the Gospel, you know how to respond to the typical challenges, but you just don't know how to get to that point. A good ice-breaker could be all that you are lacking. My ice-breaker in street ministry usually goes something like this, (as I hand them a gospel tract), "hey have you heard the good news, it is all over town, God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life, would you like to hear more."

Maybe they Mention something Religious / Religious Background

Maybe in a conversation with someone (stranger or friend) they mention something that is remotely religious or moral, you can say, "that is a very interesting statement, do you have a religious background?" And then the door opens, the ice-breaker has been made to open things up to a spiritual conversation. The other day my wife asked someone if they had a religious background and they said, why yes, I'm from Tennessee (ahh the good ole Bible belt).

(Acts 8:31 NKJV) And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him.

Reading Isaiah – Return from Jerusalem / Never know where someone At / Days Aligning

So here is the eunuch returning from Jerusalem reading the book of Isaiah. Lock that into you mind Christian, you never know where someone may be at. You never know, that all the days, of all the months, of all the years, have finally aligned themselves that this person is now seeking the spiritual things. You never know, and you will never know, unless you are open to hear the spirit, and you are willing to step out of your comfort zone and join yourself to their chariot.

Speaking of That – USA Today / 50% Suicide

Speaking of never knowing where someone is at, this week in the USA Today, there was an article titled, "Suicidal thoughts 'common' among college students." In a study among 26,000 college students (from 70 different Universities), over half said they at some point in their lives had suicidal thoughts. Of the 15,010 undergraduates, average age 22: 55% had ever thought of suicide; 18% seriously considered it; and 8% made an attempt. Among 11,441 graduate students, average age 30: Exactly half had such thoughts; 15% seriously considered it and 6% made an attempt. (see news article below)

Suicide proves the Emptiness of Life / Rev 4:11 Gap / Never know where they At

Suicide speaks to me the vanity and depravity that the world has to offer, and 50% recognize that this world isn't all that, so what is the use. The use is that man was created for fellowship with God, and anything less than that will produce and emptiness and void in a person's life. 50% with suicidal thoughts is just proof that the emptiness exists. You just never know where someone is at.

Revelation 4:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created."

Notice Also – Must be Invited to Sit / If rejected – Can I Pray / It is Free-will / Samaria

Notice this also, for I believe this is an important point of sharing our faith, and that is being invited to come "sit" with them. When someone tells me they are not interested, or simply to shut-up, I do. Now I leave them by saying can I give you this literature to read, or is there anything I can pray for you about today before we part ways (because that can get us back on the subject). But if they don't invite me to sit with them, I back away for God is a gentleman, and He allows people to exercise their free-will. We can just hope and pray that we stirred something in their heart that will make them think and consider the things of the Lord because of their meeting with us. I see in the Jesus Way, that when Samaria rejected Him, Jesus didn't push on them, or crush them, He left them. But we know the Spirit began to work, and although it was years later, Samaria has a great revival as Phillip comes and presents the same message Jesus presented.

California Street Witnessing / Upset because he was Rejected

Oh man I remember this guy in California, he joined us for street ministry one night from another church, and someone rejected his witness. Well I come around the corner, and there are these people a block away, and he is yelling at the top of his lungs, flailing his hands in the air at them, saying "well you are going to burn in hell buddy". The people were like get away from us you nutcase. I'm sure that left quite the sour taste in those peoples mouth about Christianity. Lets get to the bottom-line, this guy wasn't upset that they rejected Christ and were going to perish in the Lake of Fire, he was upset because they rejected him, and he wanted vengeance for doing so.

Knock on Door – then Wait for Invite In / Go therefore – not Wait therefore

Knock on the door (do you understand what you are reading), and then wait for the invitation to come in. Again, the Scripture says "go therefore", not wait therefore. We need to go, knock, but we can't barge in.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Don't wait forever / Wave you Neighbor to Hell / After Mailer – Great Icebreaker

Don't wait forever Christian, you can wave to your neighbor all the way to hell. Now I went and knocked on every one of my neighbors door and invited them to this Bible study; now here we are a few years later and they are next in our "gospel mailer". Guess what, when I see them after the mailer I have a great ice-breaker, so did you get that mailer that was sent out by CCAAC, that is my church. What did ya think? I've knocked, easy icebreaker, and what happens next is totally up to them. If they do close the door, the next time a plane flies into a building, or the doctor says it terminal, or "you fill in the blank", they will know who they can talk to because I didn't crush them with the gospel and close the door of any future conversation. Remember when it is no, say alright, is there anything I can pray for you for.

Re-designed Mailing Outreach

On a side note, we have re-designed our mailer outreach, and we will put more content in the paper booklet, as it will have church information, but also a very clear presentation of the gospel, and we will be taking out the CD. The booklet will encourage them to listen to the CD now on-line; the resultant is that we have cut the cost by over 66%. Each mailer cost about 43 cents now. So if you don't want to wait until we get to your neighborhood, and you want to sponsor your neighborhood, come talk to me.

2.) The Word of God

(Acts 8:32 NKJV) The place in the Scripture which he read was this: "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; And as a lamb before its shearer is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

(Acts 8:33 NKJV) In His humiliation His justice was taken away, And who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth."

(Acts 8:34 NKJV) So the eunuch answered Philip and said, "I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?"

(Acts 8:35 NKJV) Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him.

The Word Coupled with Holy Spirit – Does Work on Human Heart

The Word of God, coupled with the Holy Spirit does the work on the human heart. Our quote is from Isaiah 53, and if the Ethiopian eunuch was reading in context he would have read verses 1-6 also.

Isaiah 53:2-10 (NKJV) ² For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
And as a root out of dry ground.

He has no form or comeliness;

- And when we see Him,
There is no beauty that we should desire Him.
- ³ He is despised and rejected by men,
A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- ⁴ Surely He has borne our griefs
And carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
- ⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
- ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.
- ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
- ⁸ He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
- ⁹ And they made His grave with the wicked—
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.
- ¹⁰ Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.

Two-fold Purposes of CCAAC Bible Studies / We need to be Able to Point to Christ

As I say, all our Bible studies here at CCAAC are two-fold, one is for us to take them in individually and be conformed into His image; and the other is for the equipping of the saints for the working of the ministry. So like Phillip we need to be able to take any point in the Bible, and show them Christ. It really isn't hard either, don't feel that you can't, because the whole Bible has a natural flow to it. All the Old Testament flows to the cross, and the Lamb that was slain for the sin of each man individually, and the whole New Testament flows from the cross. So wherever you are in the Bible, either work your way to the cross, or work your way back to the cross, for the cross is the intersection of all time, and all life. Take them to the cross, and they will see Jesus, the lamb that was silent before His shearers, but now screams out loudly – I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

Christian – What Power hold in Hands / It will not Return Void

Christian, what power we hold in our hands, or better said in our hearts. We have the Word of God, and when coupled with the Holy Spirit, is pure power. A guarantee that His Word will not return void. It is good to share personal experiences and illustrations while sharing, but never in stead of the Word. For the Word is what will not return void:

Isaiah 55:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰ *"For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven,*

- And do not return there,
But water the earth,
And make it bring forth and bud,
That it may give seed to the sower
And bread to the eater,
¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,*

And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Not sure we Truly Realize / Camden

I'm, not sure we truly realize how much power we hold in our hands, for if we did we would be unleashing this Word everywhere and every chance. With this Word we can move mountains, change things that would seem impossible. I'm reminded of the other day, Camden my 2 year old loves to jump in my driver seat of the truck after we park because he loves to play with all the buttons. Well over the visor is the garage door opener. He knows what it is, so he crawls out of the seat, and goes and stands about ten feet from the door, and just keeps pushing the button, up and down, up and down, and I loved just watching his face as he did it, for he never got tired of doing it, for his face just had this look of amazement, that all that he needed was to push this little button, and he could move this 10by10 door, that was as big as a mountain to all 2 feet of him, and all 40 pounds. In his hand was amazing power, and he loved to wield it, over and over, up and down, up and down. Oh Christian, what amazing power we hold in our hands, we can open the doors of the human heart with it. Are you not amazed every time you see it for yourself? When you open this Word in your hand, share it with that person, and watch it come to understand and then watch what looked like a mountain get cast into the sea, and that person is moved by that Word of God and responds.

What Power we Have – Lets Wield It

My what power we hold in our hands, lets be like my two year old and not get tired of wielding it's power, and opening the doors of man's heart that are before us.

Discouragement – Sure to Come

Let me add this, here is something that I know happens as man witnesses, and that discouragement, as we get discouraged as we share because nobody responds, or we get mocked, or they turn nasty on us, and we get discouraged and want to quit witnessing.

I'm reminded of a modern parable that has been written about the tools of the enemy that I believe we can really learn from:

"Some time ago, an advertisement appeared in which the devil was putting all his tools up for sale. On the day of public inspection, each one of his tools was marked with its selling price: Hatred, Envy, Jealousy, Doubt, Lying, Pride, and so on, were each on the block. Set apart, however, from all the rest of the pile, was a harmless-looking tool, well-worn, but priced very high -- it was discouragement! Someone asked the devil, 'why is that one priced so high?' He replied, 'Ah, that one is more useful to me than all the rest. With it I can pry open a man's heart and enter, when I cannot get near him with any other tools. Once inside, I can lead him any way I choose. The tool is very worn because I use it on almost everyone, since few people know it belongs to me.'"

Enemy Sows – Discouragement / We have Tool much Greater – Speak it to Student/Newly

The enemy loves to sow discouragement -- but believers have a tool much more powerful -- encouragement! We can speak a word into the lives of those who desperately need to hear it: to the college student adjusting to his new environment; to the missionary who may feel alone in the harvest field; to the disillusioned newlywed young couple; to the forgotten servants of God who labor in an obscure and difficult ministry; to the orphans and the widows; to all those who need to hear a word in due season!

Power of Word – Let us not get Discouraged

We have the "power of the word", Christian let us not get discouraged in our witness.

(Acts 8:36 NKJV) Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, "See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?"

(Acts 8:37 NKJV) Then Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

What happened Between 35-36 / John 3:16 – The NT Version of Ish 53T

So what happened between verse 35 and 36? What happens is that the eunuch sees and believes the gospel, he believes in his heart basically – John 3:16, for that is the New Testament version of Isaiah 53.

John 3:16 (NKJV) *16For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Note: Phillip makes Sure he is Sure

Very important to see and note here, Phillip makes sure that this man is sure. Phillip is making sure that this man clearly understands the gospel, and clearly understands what he is doing and why he is going to be baptized. What all Phillip said and preached between verse 35 and 36 we do not know, but he makes sure that this man clearly understands. Maybe Phillip after his experience with Simon is making sure that every person he witnesses to clearly understands.

Very Important we do the Same

How important that we do the same. Don't be afraid to say to a person, even if you were not the one who was sharing with them, don't be afraid to say, "I want to be sure, that you are sure." Let us not be guilty of making false converts. People who have heard the words, but truly haven't understood them.

Russia Street Witnessing

I remember when I was in Russia. We were going out to do street witnessing and open air preaching; well all these guys are saying, and so and so will be going with us, and man she is a machine, she leads so many people to Christ every time we go out. I'm like cool (I was saved 2 years at that point) and I was trying to glean nuggets on the how-to as often as I could. Well I was listening to her present, and it quickly became clear to me that she really didn't make sure that they person understood the gospel, she was happy to tell anyone who said they believed in God that they were saved. I see it in too many evangelical churches today, they ask people if they want to pray to receive the Lord, and lead people in a prayer, then tell them they are saved, but have never made sure that the person clearly understand – Sin, Separation, Savior,

Excellent example by Phillip

So, excellent example here in Phillip, let's make sure they understand.

(Acts 8:38 NKJV) So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him.

(Acts 8:39 NKJV) Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing.

I Love It – No time for Praises or Rewards

I love it, no time for praises, no time for rewards for Phillip. All that money, all that power, all that the eunuch could have offered Phillip, but no time for it as the Lord whisks Phillip away.

No Recognition – but God Records It / Oregon Witnessing

You know there will be times where you will play a major role in someone's spiritual life, and may get no recognition for it. Ah, don't worry about, God records it. The main point is that they got saved. I remember we were doing street ministry for a Harvest Crusade in Oregon in 1995. I shared Christ with this girl who was all messed up on heroin, yet God broke through all of it, and this girl received Christ (actually first person I ever led to the Lord). One of the things I told her was (which I tell all people who have just received Christ), to go tell other people. Tell as many people as possible because it will make their profession real, and of course there is no greater zeal than that of a new believer (think about all us old crusty saints – I can't tell someone about Jesus they'll think I'm crazy). Well the next day I see her on the floor of the Crusade (for I had invited to come and go). So I see her talking to these people before the crusade and I come up and go hey, how are you. I got to tell ya I didn't even recognize her, the day before she had all these sores on her bodies from picking at her skin because of the heroin, her face was all dull

and sunken, well when I see her here the next day, all her sores were healed, her face was smooth and glowing. So I say hey how are you doing, she looks at me and says good, who are you. I go I met you yesterday on the street, but she goes I don't remember you. So I lean over to the folks she was talking to and said do you know her, and they go no, we were just standing here and she came up and said, I want you to know that I gave my life to Jesus Christ yesterday. I said all right, praise the Lord, God bless you guys and walked away. She was the first person I led to the Lord, and God showed me, don't wait around or expect any recognition from anyone, but just know that I see. Funny, I passed this girl just a little later, and I hear her say to someone, hi my name is so-and-so, and I just wanted you to know that I gave my life to Jesus Christ yesterday. I later found out her she went back home to her parents.

3.) The Man of God.

(Acts 8:40 NKJV) But Philip was found at Azotus. And passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

Phillip Used Mightily / Reminded of Nehemiah / Sent – Protected - Supplied

Phillip was used by the Lord in a mighty way, and speaking of being used by the Lord, I am reminded when Nehemiah asked to leave Babylon and go back to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after the 70 year period of captivity was over. In verse 5, Nehemiah asked to be sent. In verse 7, he asked to be kept safe. Here in verse 8, he asks to be supplied.

- “Why doesn't God use me?” some people ask. “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name,” Jesus said (John 16:24). If you are one who wonders why God isn't using you, have you, like Nehemiah, asked to be sent?
- “If He does send me, will I be kept safe? Will I be able to handle it emotionally or physically?” you wonder. “I'll never leave you nor forsake you,” Jesus answers (Hebrews 13:5).
- “But I don't have the supplies, the training, or the qualifications,” you might say. Nehemiah lacked the supplies to build the wall. But that didn't stop him. He asked the king for them. And so must we ask our King, who has promised to give us abundantly above all we could ask or even think (Ephesians 3:20).

***Nehemiah 2:5-8 (NKJV)** ⁵And I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.”*

⁶Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), “How long will your journey be? And when will you return?” So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time. ⁷Furthermore I said to the king, “If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, ⁸and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.” And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me.

Step 1 – Before Step 2 / Phillip not faithful to Step 1 – No Step 2

In our story of Phillip, and how we are to be, to be used to lead others to Christ, we see Phillip being willing to be led step by step. First God said arise and go towards Gaza, and so Phillip did even though it didn't make sense because he was right in the middle of a great revival there in Samaria, but Phillip obeyed faithfully. Then after Phillip obeyed and took step one, God gave him step two, and that was join yourself to the chariot, and then this great story of salvation and conversion, and the gospel is now on its way to Ethiopia. Had Phillip not be faithful to step one, there would have been no step two. Christian, be obedient to step one, whatever that is in your life, then be assured, step two will come in God's divine timing.

I Speak Experience – This Verse that God Called me Here

I speak from experience, for this verse 26 is the very verse that God spoke to me in a morning devotion several years ago. I was at this verse, and God spoke very clearly to my heart, and told me to arise and go to the south, even though it is desert. It was desert to me because I was serving in the number 2 role at a church that was in the midst of a revival north of here in Balitmore. Exciting things were happening, I was coordinating missions for the church and we were taking 24 – 44 people on a mission trip every year; I would fill in for the Pastor when he

went away, all the way from the pulpit to the counseling. It was exciting, people respected me, looked up to me, and then God spoke and said, go to the south, it is desert there, but start a work. So here we are; no step two, until I was obedient to step one.

(Acts 8:26 NKJV) Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert.

So God Couples Spirit, Word – With Person / Why – I Don't Know – But Thankful

So God couples His Holy Spirit, with His Word, and with His people. Why He chooses to use us I do not know, but am ever so thankful to be a part of what He is doing.

Consider the Ethiopian / High Official – Riches and Power / Remind you of Anyone

As we close I want you to consider this Ethiopian. We read here that this man of Ethiopia had charge of all the treasure of the queen. He was actually the Secretary of the Treasury. He was an official, and a high official of that day. This man was not traveling alone. He had a great retinue of servants and minor officials with him. He wasn't sitting in a chariot with the reins in one hand and a book in the other hand as we see him pictured. This man was sitting back in a chariot, protected from the sun by a canopy. He had a private chauffeur and was riding in style. This man was enjoying the riches of the world (can you relate that to anyone you know today).

Consider – Came to Worship – Kept Outside / Desiring to Understand – but kept Distance

But something to consider about him, he was a citizen of Ethiopia, but he had come to Jerusalem to worship. This indicates that he was a proselyte to Judaism. He had just been to Jerusalem, the center of the Jewish religion. Although Judaism was the God-given religion, he was leaving the city still in the dark. He was reading the prophet Isaiah, but he was not understanding what he was reading. You see, being a non-Jew, he would not have been permitted to enter the temple area, he would have had to stay in the Court of the Gentiles, he could not get as close to God as he had wanted. Along with being a Gentile, he was also a eunuch, and no dismembered (scared) person could enter the temple either. Does this eunuch sound like anyone you know, coming close to true worship, desiring to understand more of the Lord, but being kept at a distance because of certain circumstances.

Dismembered – Couldn't Enter / Method of World / Maimed – Hurt by World

Even if he was a Jew he couldn't enter the "Holy Place" of the Temple because he was scarred and dismembered. His scarring and dismembering came at the hands of the world as the Kings would have a man castrated so they would not be distracted by woman and family and they could fully focus and dedicate themselves on the king and his needs. Does this eunuch sound like anyone you know, hurt and maimed by the world.

Deuteronomy 23:1 (NKJV) "He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the LORD.

Eunuch had Power, Money, Position – Still Left in Dark

This eunuch had money, power, and position, but he is leaving Jerusalem still in the dark. He leaves and enters into the dry desert. Can you think of anyone like that in your life?

God sees and had been Waiting / Since Foundation of World / Jesus goes after the 1

God sees, and God has been waiting for the perfect aligning of situations and circumstances, and He meets this no-named eunuch with His Spirit, His Word, and His person (Phillip). This is what God has been waiting for since the foundations of the world, for this moment in time to meet this man. This man isn't just one of the many, God has Phillip in a mighty revival amongst the multitude, but has Phillip leave for the one. The picture of Jesus going after that one lost lamb. The Lord says I will separate the one, to go reach the one, for I have been waiting for this moment since the foundation of the world.

Picture of Camden – Waiting / God had Waited for this Man / I Love You / Rejoicing Heaven

I have this picture of Camden that I have etched in my mind, it is a moment in time. He is about three or four months old, and I remember doting over him one day, and he was so happy his little tongue was just quivering like he wanted to talk and tell me something. I remember looking and

saying oh how I can't wait to hear that tongue day to me, "daddy, I love you". I long and wait for that moment to hear those words. God has been waiting since the foundations of the world to hear this Ethiopian eunuch say, "Father, I love you". How God waited, His heart pounding to hear those words, continually looking at the eunuch's tongue to hear those words, "daddy I love you" (Luke 15 - notice in the presence of angles (not angels) – that is God rejoicing). And now on this day, God hears the words He had been waiting to hear, and if Phillip could have seen the Father, he would have seen the expression of joy, and he would have seen the smile of God, thanks for being a part of this Phillip (well done faithful servant), you have brought great joy to my life (casting crowns at His feet). I don't fully understand why He chooses to use us, but to think that I get to bring a smile unto the face of God, that I can be a part of something that makes Him get excited and get up out of His seat, I can only ask and say – *Here I am Lord, Send Me!*

Luke 15:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."*

Matthew 25:23 (NKJV) ²³*His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'*

Revelation 4:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰*the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

¹¹ *"You are worthy, O Lord,
To receive glory and honor and power;
For You created all things,
And by Your will they exist and were created."*

News Article in USA Today

"Suicidal thoughts 'common' among college students."

By Sharon Jayson, USA TODAY – August 2008

BOSTON — A comprehensive study of suicidal thinking among college students found more than half of the 26,000 surveyed had suicidal thoughts at some point during their lifetime.

The web-based survey conducted in spring 2006 used separate samples of undergraduate and graduate students from 70 colleges and universities across the country.

Of the 15,010 undergraduates, average age 22: 55% had ever thought of suicide; 18% seriously considered it; and 8% made an attempt. Among 11,441 graduate students, average age 30: Exactly half had such thoughts; 15% seriously considered it and 6% made an attempt.

"Suicidal crises are a common occurrence on college campuses," says Chris Brownson, director of the University of Texas Counseling and Mental Health Center in Austin and one of the study's researchers.

The findings, which were presented Sunday at a session of the American Psychological Association's annual meeting, were compiled from online surveys conducted by the National Research Consortium of Counseling Centers in Higher Education based at the UT-Austin.

"A lot of previous research has indicated the severity of mental health issues on college campuses has been increasing — not decreasing — and when you look at the lifetime prevalence rates, those are alarming statistics," Brownson says.

Within the 12 months before answering the survey, 6% of undergraduates and 4% of graduate students reported seriously considering suicide. However, among those students who thought about it within the past year, an episode of suicidal thinking was typically brief. For both groups, more than half of these episodes lasted a day or less, with about one-third reporting such thoughts lasted an hour or less. Suicidal thinking is frequently recurring, though. The study also found that among those who thought about killing themselves within the past year, just under half of both groups told no one.

The reasons for suicidal thinking varied, with wanting relief from emotional or physical pain as the major reason. Others were romantic relationship troubles; a desire to end their life; and school-related problems. The preferred method for suicide was overdosing on drugs, with half of those who had tried to kill themselves reporting using drugs.

Whether there are in fact more disturbed young people in college today is a subject of debate, according to the researchers, who say more young people with mental health issues are able to attend college as a result of drugs and other treatment measures; more women are in college and they are more likely to seek professional help; and colleges have improved their tracking of those with mental health concerns.

Of the students surveyed, 17% of undergraduates and 22% of graduate students reported having ever taken medicine for mental health concerns.

"Most people in university environments don't really appreciate how much suicidality students engage in. They only see the high-profile examples, but they don't see the everyday anguish students are going through," says UT psychologist David Drum, lead author of the research.

"A study like this raises awareness of the fact this is a more ubiquitous phenomenon. We really need to keep rescuing those in need, but we need to be shifting some of our focus to building resilience and resistance and immunity to ever engage in these thoughts."

Chapter 9

Saul – Desired of God **Acts 9:1-9**

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Chp 9 – Account Saul’s Conversion / from Unrest t Peace / Paul Desired of God

Here in chapter 9 we read the account of the conversion of Saul of Taurus, who God will change his name to Paul, and we call him our brother Paul the Apostle. A most wonderful story of conversion, from a life of turmoil and unrest, to a life of peace and love. Saul is every person reading this story, for we will see that Saul was desired of God, and so too for every one of you here today, you are desired of God, He has a passion for you, and longs for you, and is calling out to you today.

If had Damascus Experience – He says More! – Come Away

If you do not know Him personally he is calling you to a personal and intimate relationship with Him today; if you have had a Damascus road experience with Him already, then today He still says “more”, that He wants more of you today than He had of you yesterday, and calls you to come deeper with Him. Will you join me today as we “come away” with Him, and fall deeper and deeper in love with Him.

Song of Songs 2:10-13 (NKJV) ¹⁰ *My beloved spoke, and said to me:*

“Rise up, my love, my fair one,

And come away.

¹¹ *For lo, the winter is past,*

The rain is over and gone.

¹² *The flowers appear on the earth;*

The time of singing has come,

And the voice of the turtledove

Is heard in our land.

¹³ *The fig tree puts forth her green figs,*

And the vines with the tender grapes

Give a good smell.

Rise up, my love, my fair one,

And come away!

Let’s pick up our study here in chapter 9, verse 1:

(Acts 9:1 NKJV) Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

(Acts 9:2 NKJV) and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:3 NKJV) As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

(Acts 9:4 NKJV) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

(Acts 9:5 NKJV) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Damascus Road – Saul Converted

(Acts 9:1 NKJV) Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

Destroying Jerusalem not Enough / Damascus 160 miles Away / 7-10 Journey / Incensed
Saul destroying the Christians in Jerusalem wasn't enough, he wanted to slaughter and destroy any and everyone of the "Way" that he could. He is willing to go 160 miles to the north of Jerusalem, to Damascus (which is in Syria – see Map) to reach them, to find them, to hunt them down, which is a good 7-10 day journey by mule, and probably 200 miles by road – yet Saul is so incensed he is willing to do it. (**check out a Map**)

Saul Means – Desired / God even desires the Murderers / We rank Sin / = Bubblegum Thief
The root word of the name Saul means "desired" and we see through the person of Saul, that yes God even desires the murderer, the family destroyer. We can only understand that, when we understand holiness. We have a tendency to rank sin (from biggie to little), but God's standard is perfection, therefore His list does not run from top to bottom, but from left to right (or right to left if He is in China). His list only has one numeric to it, and that is Number 1, and then it rolls across the page instead of down the page. James 2:10 God says that if a man is guilty of one sin, he is therefore considered guilty of all sin. So the bubblegum thief is considered as guilty as the murderer or pedophile.

Saul (shaw-al', shaw-ale)' - A primitive root; to inquire; by implication to request; by extension to demand:—ask (counsel, on), beg, borrow, lay to charge, consult, demand, desire, X earnestly, enquire, + greet, obtain leave, lend, pray, request, require, + salute, X straitly, X surely, wish.

James 2:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

God doesn't Rank – Sin / Gum & Murder / But those who think won't be Received

God doesn't rank sin, therefore even the bubble-gum thief should be as worried and fearful of his offence before the Holy God, as the murderer or pedophile should be. But, then there are those who know they have fallen short of the glory of God, and feel that God would never receive them because of what they have done or who they are. The Lord sends a clear message to all, "My blood is sufficient for you, just as it was for Saul, so it is for you." As I gave My blood for a murderer who hunted down my children and slaughtered them, made widows and orphans, so my blood is for you. *For I "desire" you as much as I desired Saul.* You here today, you are desired by God, He has a passion of love for you, and only personal intimacy will satisfy His desire for you; He is not distant or far off, He is hear and now for you.

God desired Paul – As Horrible as Was / Wants to Hear tongue say – Love / Name Replace
God desired Saul, as horrible as he was, God desired him, to be His, to hear Saul say the same words that the Ethiopian Eunuch had just said, "I love you daddy". Always interesting to insert the meaning of someone's name into the passage in place of their name; let's take a look at how some of them would read when we do:

Act 7:58 - And cast [him] out of the city, and stoned [him]: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was **Saul**.

Act 8:1 (KJV) - And **Saul** was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Act 8:3 (KJV) - As for **Saul**, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed [them] to prison.

Act 9:1 (KJV) - And **Saul**, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest,

Act 9:4 (KJV) - And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, **Saul, Saul**, why persecutest thou me?

Desired – Desired – He says to Us Today / Desires Regardless / Take His Breath Away

Desired, Desired, the Lord would say to you and to me, oh how He desires us no matter what we have done and where we have been. Receive that word today into your heart, and enjoy being “desired” by Him who loves you so much that when He looks upon you He takes His breath away. Could you have a greater love in all this world than He, I know not!

(Acts 9:2 NKJV) and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

V1 – Still Breathing Threats – It was Air Saul Breathed

In verse 1 it says that Saul still breathing threats and murder against the disciples went to the high priest. The word there for “breathing” is used there in that sentence in such a way that it is saying, that the air that sustained Saul’s life, the air that kept him alive, was the seeking out and destroying the disciples (the followers of Christ). He awoke in the morning with one thought on his mind – kill and destroy:

(Breath, Breathe lit)., “to breathe in, or on,” is used in Act 9:1, indicating that threatening and slaughter were, so to speak, the elements from which Saul drew and expelled his breath.

How this Reminds me of Job – get Permission / Threats – Renounce Christ / Trials = Test

But, interestingly to me how much this reminds me of Job, as in Saul had to get permission to do his harm, so did Satan have to get permission to do his harm to Job. Saul is bringing both threats and murder against them. This says to me that he killed those that would not bow the knee to his threats, and his threats must have been to renounce Jesus Christ as the Way. Trials come for the testing, the proving of our faith, and Peter said don’t count it strange when they do.

Job 1:9-12 (NKJV) ⁹So Satan answered the LORD and said, “Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” ¹²And the LORD said to Satan, “Behold, all that he has is in your power; only do not lay a hand on his person.” So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

1 Peter 4:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Don’t worry man can Do / Why God we Ask? / Make Election Sure / Saul gives Choice

Jesus said don’t worry about what man can do your physical body, rather worry what God can do with your soul. Why would you allow this to come against your people Lord we might ask, why didn’t you protect them we may charge Him. I know it is hard to believe, but we see God’s grace here, for He is giving opportunity for people to “make their call and election sure”. Many a people would have gladly prayed the prayer, been baptized, to in their mind secure their eternal salvation. Saul sweeping through the land giving choice, renounce or die, would have given people clear opportunity to know what they truly believed. For those that renounced Christ, and then went back to their home would at some point sat in quietness of the night (even if it was God waking them in the middle-of-the-night), and they would have to honestly ask themselves, what exactly is it that I believe. They would have to come face to face with Matthew 10:32, and say I denied Him before man, therefore He is denying me before the Father in heaven. What am I going to do about that?

Matthew 10:28 (NKJV) ²⁸And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

2 Peter 1:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; ¹¹for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Matthew 10:32-39 (NKJV) ³²“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. ³³But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

³⁴“Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; ³⁶and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household.’ ³⁷He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he

who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

Saul starts Jerusalem – Chases 160 miles / God Desires too much – Profess go Comfort

Saul started in Jerusalem, and now is chasing after those who have been dispersed by the persecution, and those who had already lived their in Damascus but heard and received the word. Damascus is about 160 miles from Jerusalem, but Saul is coming for them. God desires a person too much to let them make a profession for Him, and then go on into a comfort zone and never get to bring to the surface what is truly going on in their heart. Be thankful for the trials of life for they give us the opportunity to make their call and election sure, and to clearly see what we truly believe.

Saul goes Everyone – Except Apostles / Jerusalem – Beachhead / Satan limited on Job

Now let me point out again, Saul is going after everyone, except the Apostles. Saul is going to foreign soil, dragging people out of homes, murdering some, dragging others all the way back to Jerusalem and throwing them in prison (no doubt trying to wear them down to renounce Christ). He is achieving all that, except he cannot touch the Apostles. Reminds me of Job again as God put the limit on how far Satan could go. As we have said, Jerusalem is the beachhead, the Normandy of Christianity, and the apostles are the flag planters of Iwo Jima Japan, and the apostles firmly entrenched and dug in there sends a clear and loud message, that Christianity is established, is entrenched, it shall not be overcome, and there will be no stopping the Jesus Movement.

Acts 8:1 (NKJV) ¹Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

Job 2:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life.

⁵But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!"

⁶And the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your hand, but spare his life."

For us as Followers – 2 Things (Allowing – Preventing) / No Man, Gov't, Pgm / Discourage

For us as followers of this Movement, we see two happenings on complete opposite sides of the spectrum. On the one side we see God allowing hardship, on the other side we see God preventing hardship. A lifetime could never explain all the dynamics of those two, but application for us today is this, no man, government, or program can stop the work of God in your life, only you can by your willful disobedience, or your succumbing to Satan's greatest tool, discouragement. Where other vices won't work, Satan will continually go back to the master one, discouragement, and get us downtrodden so we just want to quit, give-up, or ease-up. But Christian, *we must allow the outside circumstances to help shape the inside transformation that God is desiring to do. Again, we must allow the outside circumstances to help shape the inside transformation that God is desiring to do.*

Whatever Happening in your Life – God Allowing/Preventing / How do I Respond

Whatever it is that is happening in your life, whether it is a God allowing, or a God preventing, we must bring ourselves to that place, that is God working, and now based on the Scriptures, how do I respond to all that is going on around me.

(Acts 9:3 NKJV) As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

(Acts 9:4 NKJV) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

(Acts 9:5 NKJV) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Goads – long Sticks / Keep Beast of Burden from Kicking back / Bring pain upon Itself

Goads are long sticks with sharp points on them mounted to the plow or sled, and that was to keep the beast-of-burden animal (whether an ox, mule, etc) from trying to kick off the taskmaster that was on the plow or sled. If the animal tried to back kick the master, it would get these pointy

sticks jabbing right into its heel, and after a few kicks the beast would be in such pain, it would know it is futile to try to back-kick the master for it only brought pain and suffering upon itself.

Jesus saying – More kick – more Pain / Saul's very Air – Killing – but Every Kill more Pain

Jesus is saying to Saul, you are trying to put up a fight against me, but the more you kick against Me, the more pain you bring upon yourself. Saul's very air that drives him on every day is the hatred of the Christians, but every Christian that he killed or tortured only brought more pain upon Saul himself. Jesus is saying you can keep kicking, but you'll never kick me off the sled/plow, I desire you Paul, and I Am not going away.

Lord answers – I am Jesus (not Holy One) / in Hebrew / Name that bridges both Religions

It is interesting to me that the Lord answers Saul's question of who He was with the identification, "I am Jesus". He didn't say the Creator, or the Everlasting Father, the Holy One of Israel, as He was talking to this great expert of Judaism, but most ignorant of Christianity. He identifies Himself to Paul as Jesus. Paul later tells us in Acts 26 that the voice of Jesus spoke in Hebrew. Jesus could have spoken to Saul in either Hebrew or Greek for Saul was fluent in both (for as a Sanhedrin he would have to be a master in the Hebrew, and we see His gospels written in masterful Greek). God answers him in the Name that is the bridge between both Judaism and Christianity, between Hebrew and Greek, between death and life, the Name "Jesus" (pronounced Joshua in the Hebrew). Jesus is the Greek translation for the Hebrew word, "Yeshuwah (Joshua)", which is the compound word meaning – God Saves (or God is Salvation). Jesus also answers Saul with (I Am) which means the existing one, and the name Jesus used of Himself often (John 8, John 10, to name a few), tying Himself back to Exodus 3 – I AM that I AM. So Jesus clearly identifying Himself as God.

(Matthew 1:21 NKJV) "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."

Act 26:14 (KJV) And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Saul – All holding on to – Found in Me

Saul all that you are trying to hold on to with your religion, your self-righteousness, is found in Me, I am the full embodiment

Jesus is full-embodiment of Compound Names / I Am – Becoming One

Saul, Jesus is saying, My name is the compound word that is the full embodiment of all the compound names you know God as (being an expert in Judaism), and I will become all these things to you, just as I said there on the Mount to Moses, I Am that I Am, which means the Becoming One, for He wants to become all we need:

- Genesis 22 – The Lord will Provide – Jehovah Jireh
- Exodus 15 – The Lord is Our Healer – Jehovah Raphah
- Exodus 17 – The Lord is Our Banner – Jehovah Nissi
- Judges 6 – The Lord is Our Peace – Jehovah Shalom
- Psalm 23 – The Lord is our Shepherd – Jehovah Ra
- Jeremiah 23 – The Lord is Our Righteousness – Jehovah Tsidqenuw
- Ezekiel 48 – The Lord is the Ever Present One – Jehovah Shammah

(Exodus 3:14 NKJV) And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Provider – Healer – Banner – Peace – Shepherd – Righteousness – Present One

Saul, I am your Provider of salvation, not your works. I am your Healer, and will cover your sins. I am your Banner that will fly over you, not your title and position at the Temple. I am your peace, and you have absolutely no peace for you are in torment kicking against the goads. I am your Shepherd, and right now you are just running mad, you can't even think straight, running all 200 miles to kill some more. Saul, I am your righteousness, not the righteousness that you think you have in the Law. And, I am the ever-present One you are desiring. You see, something totally sets Saul off, as he goes from one of the boys of seventy (Sanhedrin) to being will to travel 200

miles over 10 days on the back of a donkey to go find more “of the Way” to slaughter, whereas only a short while ago he was too refined to actually throw the stones, but now is willing to go 200 miles and drag them out personally; and I believe it was seeing Stephen, blood pouring, face pummeled by the rocks, looking up and seeing the Son of Man “STANDING” at the right hand of God, and still saying forgive them they know not what they do. How could this simple busboy have a personal audience with God, God standing up for him, while I can even sense His presence in my life even as religious as I am.

Acts 7:57-58 (NKJV) ⁵⁷Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; ⁵⁸and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Acts 7:55-56 (NKJV) ⁵⁵But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, ⁵⁶and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

Saul’s Name – Two-fold / God desires Us - We made to desire God

Saul’s name has a two-fold meaning (as he represents all of mankind in a sense), and that is that God is desiring him, and man (as Saul’s before the regeneration into Paul’s) are all desiring a personal relationship with God, and the knowledge and peace that God is Ever-Present in their lives, for the Lord has created a God-shaped vacuum into the heart of every man and woman, that only He can fill.

Revelation 4:11 (KJV) ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

(Acts 9:6 NKJV) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

For Starters – Done Persecuting

For starters Saul, your persecution days of Me are over. The word Persecution means **Persecution** – a.) in any way whatever to harass, trouble, molest one. b) to persecute. c) to be mistreated, suffer persecution on account of something. d) to drive away.

Jesus presents Spiritual Marvel – The Body of Christ / Saul do it to Me

Jesus is presenting the spiritual marvel of the “body of Christ”, and that when Saul harassed, troubled, or molested one “of the Way”, that he was doing that to Jesus personally.

Ephesians 1:22-23 (NKJV) ²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 5:30-32 (NKJV) ³⁰For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. ³¹“For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” ³²This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

May we Remember that in Next letter, phone call / Dear Jesus – Hello Jesus speaking

May we as a people remember that, that anytime we bring attack against that brother or sister, may we remember that we are attacking Jesus Christ Himself. I would challenge you that next time you sit down to write that scathing letter or email to the person, instead of writing “dear John”, first title it, “Dear Jesus”, and see how it affects how the rest of the letter goes. Before you pick-up that phone, imagine you are dialing the number to phone that sits on the table next to the Throne of God, and the answer is – Hello, Jesus speaking. See how that changes your tone, your heart, your mind. Next time you want to confront that brother or sister, as you tap them on the shoulder imagine it is Jesus turning around to you, beaten and bloodied face, and a nail pierced hand extending towards you saying “hi John.” May our words never “drive away” anyone, but only lift them and build them up in Christ.

First stop Persecuting – Next go to City / Good question to ask Daily

So first thing Saul is to stop persecuting Me, and next, go to the city and I’ll ya next. Good question for each of us to ask the Lord on a “daily” basis, what do you want me to do? And have ears to hear if He says sit for awhile, or go do this. Don’t do anything until you hear what He tells

you to do, and if He tells you to do nothing, that is doing what He wants you to do. But everyday may we meet with Christ, and say, "what is it that you want me to do today."

(Acts 9:7 NKJV) And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

(Acts 9:8 NKJV) Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

(Acts 9:9 NKJV) And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

These guys no Clue – Bet Paul looked them Up later / Share your Testimony

So these guys had no clue of what was going on, but I imagine that at some point Paul is going to track them down and tell them exactly what happened to him on that day. I would encourage you to do the same if you have not done so; your friends know something happened to you, they aren't quite sure what it was, but you had some type of experience and you are definitely a changed person, so go find them and tell them what happened to you, go tell them your testimony.

Imagine Paul – 3 days no Sight / Knocked off High Horse

Now imagine what must have been going on in Saul's mind for those 3 days with no sight for 3 days. His world has just been turned upside-down, and he can't see a thing. He has to be led around by his hand. Saul has definitely been knocked off his high horse, and may we be thankful that God has done the same for us.

3 says only seeing His Memory

But imagine 3 days of seeing nothing physically; that means he can only see the images that were locked into his memory. Images of crying woman as they watched Saul kill their husband. Screaming babies reaching with hands in the air for mommy and daddy, but they were now laying dead. Images of widows and orphans digging through the trash just trying to survive another day. These are the images that Saul would sit in the darkness and see for the next three days, and the voice of God ringing in his head - **"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"**

Man can never understand the brightness of God's Holiness, until they clearly see the darkness of their sin.

God is Coming / Meet Saul in Darkness – man named Gracious / Gracious God desires You

God is coming to Saul we will read next week as God sends Ananias a devout man of God to meet Saul in his darkness. Ananias – means God is gracious, Saul means desired, and thus we see the Gracious God desires you, and pulls us out of our darkness.

(Acts 9:10 NKJV) Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

Saul – Led by God (the Leading of the Lord)

Acts 9:10-19

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Saul – Orphan Maker / Sits in Darkness – Gracious God Coming / Picture of Christian

Well Saul, the orphan and widow maker, has been knocked off his high horse, face-first into the dirt as the Resurrected Christ has appeared before him. As we ended our last study, Saul has been led by hand to a house in Damascus and for three days will sit in darkness. Ananias, a devout man of God, will receive a call (in the form of a vision) to go speak to Saul. Ananias means "God is gracious", Saul means "desired", and thus we see the Gracious God coming to the man He desires, who presently is sitting in darkness. It is the summation of the entire gospel (good news), which is the loving and gracious God who loves you so, desires to come into your life, and take you out of darkness into his marvelous light. My, my how God loves you, He desires you, and I hope that grabs your heart right here and now, that you know that and experience that today:

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) *⁹But you are a **chosen** generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

Pick up In Verse 10

Well in this account before us today, we will read of two men, and two visions, let's pick it up in verse 10.

(Acts 9:10 NKJV) Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said **in a vision**, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

(Acts 9:11 NKJV) So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

(Acts 9:12 NKJV) "And **in a vision** he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

(Acts 9:13 NKJV) Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:14 NKJV) "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

(Acts 9:15 NKJV) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

(Acts 9:16 NKJV) "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

(Acts 9:17 NKJV) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 9:18 NKJV) Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

(Acts 9:19 NKJV) So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

Said & See – Confusing / Ever Wonder if that was You or the Lord

Verse 10 - the definition of “said” is (to speak or say), and the definition of “vision” is (that which is seen). So, how clear is that to you? The Lord said in the vision, but is recorded that Ananias only heard in what is something to be seen (a vision). Have I confused you, having a heard time following me? Good, I guess, because haven’t we all said and wondered at one time, now was that from you Lord. Did You just speak to me, or is this really just me thinking this stuff.

A Frequent Question / Flip Side – don’t Ask / Belly of Fish

One of the most asked questions I get as a Pastor is, “how do I know if that was me (and my self-wants), or if that was something that the Lord was speaking to me. Sadly, on the flip side is an equal lacking, that people just go off and make decisions and feel – I’m a Christian and it will all work out because “God is Love”. God is Love this is true, and He will be with you, even in the belly of a great fish, but you would do well to go where He is leading, rather than asking Him to follow your lead – for you may find yourself all washed-up where you are trying to go. We live in a time where you can make some bad decisions and still recover because our economy is so great, but those days won’t last forever and we are seeing the beginning signs of that. But as for our marriages, our children, I believe the margin of error there is zero, as the world and all the garbage available to a person leaves us in a place that one bad decision can start a person or family down a path of spiritual destruction. This study is vital to every Christian, and thus why you should move to the edge of your seats, and thus why you need to quit being distracted by whatever else it is that is on your mind, and totally lock-in on this word of the Lord today.

Whether Lord Seeking You – or You seeking Lord / Need not Struggle

Now, whether it is the Lord seeking you out, desiring to lead and guide you, or it is you seeking the Lord out for His leading and guiding, you need not struggle and strive with the leading of the Lord, for He desires to lead you. You see if anything is of the Lord, then it was initiated by the Lord, and desires upon our heart (whether in the form of a vision or not), are visions from the Lord, of Him wanting to lead you somewhere. So in your seeking of the Lord, or Him seeking you, large or small, think of these 3 groups, ask yourself these 7 questions, and you can have confidence you are going in the right direction, in the “Straight” direction as God tells Ananias, go to the street called Straight:

(Acts 9:11 NKJV) So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

Is it Cool?

- Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, “how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?”
- Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, “has this desire stood the Test of Time?”
- Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, “am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?”

Will It Count?

- Major Point 4 when considering your decision ask yourself, “who am I really doing this for?”

Does it Conform?

- Major Point 5 when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”
- Major Point 6 when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”
- Major Point 7 when considering your decision ask yourself, “what does godly counsel say?”.

Too many Christians end in Belly of Fish / Hope you make Part of Daily Decisions

I've known too many a Christians to end up in the belly of a great fish, because they didn't consider these 7 things when trying to be lead by the Lord, and I hope today you will make these part of your daily life making decisions, so you can always stay on the street called Straight.

Let's Flip to Exodus 13

Let's flip back in our bibles to Exodus chapter 13, for we see a wonderful passage of Scriptures where we see God leading His people.

***Exodus 13:17-22 (NKJV)** ¹⁷Then it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, "Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt." ¹⁸So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt. ¹⁹And Moses took the bones of Joseph with him, for he had placed the children of Israel under solemn oath, saying, "God will surely visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you." ²⁰So they took their journey from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the wilderness. ²¹And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. ²²He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people.*

Recap

To recap, God delivered the 10th and final plague, the death of the first born to all who would not apply the blood over the home. The Egyptians said get out, and heaped silver and gold upon the Hebrews. So now after 400 years of slavery, the children of Israel are leaving Egypt.

No One Knows the Way / Way to Go Moe

Now imagine this, they have been in Egypt for 400 years, no one really knows the way to the Promised Land, how could they, they've never seen the outside of Egypt, Moses has only gone as far as Sinai himself. If I am Moses I am saying this is great, Pharaoh has been defeated, we are free, only one problem though, does anybody know how to get to the land of Canaan? Now being a man, he couldn't ask directions, and with every pat on the back, way to go Moe, you are our leader, I'll follow you anywhere. Great Moses is saying to himself, problem is I don't know how to get there.

We Freed of Egypt – Going to Promised Land / Problem is how to Get there

Hey we have been freed from the bondages of Egypt; we are going to the Promised Land to see our Savior, but the fact is, how exactly do I get there, what path do you want me to take to get there Lord? We are going to need some help from the Lord.

Wish Lord lead Us by Cloud & Pillar / Better Way – Jesus Personal Relationship / The Word

So many people wish the Lord would lead them by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night; I can assure you something, we have a much better way – for today God speaks to us by the Son, and the Son leads us on our way, and that is a much better way, a personal intimate God speaking to His child, just as you speak to your child, giving them a Word to help them make decisions on what to do in life.

***(Hebrews 1:1 NKJV)** God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, **(Hebrews 1:2 NKJV)** has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;*

***(Psalms 119:105 NKJV)** Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

Good Example in Ex 13 / What decision for You / Ask 3 Questions

Do you know what, He gives us a good practical example in this passage on how to be lead by the Lord, how to determine the paths to take for our journey. In this passage, as the Lord lead the children of Israel, we see so does He lead us, if we allow Him to. So in your decisions, large or small, think of these 3 groups, ask yourself these 7 questions (to follow) when you are trying to determine if this is Gods will for your life:

1. Is it Cool?
2. Will it Count?
3. Does it Conform?

1.) Is it Cool?

Best Commentary – Psalm 105 / Actually Over Them – 120 / Cloud Moved they Moved

Best commentary on the Bible is the Bible, and Psalm 105 gives us more insight, maybe brings some clarity. For I think many of us think that the cloud was out in front of the congregation, but actually it was over them. God spread the cloud over the people to protect them from the 120 degree temperatures that the desert can reach in the heat of the day. So when God wanted to move the people, He would just move the cloud, and to stay cool they would move with the cloud.
(Psalms 105:36 NKJV) He also destroyed all the firstborn in their land, The first of all their strength.
(Psalms 105:37 NKJV) He also brought them out with silver and gold, And there was none feeble among His tribes.
(Psalms 105:38 NKJV) Egypt was glad when they departed, For the fear of them had fallen upon them.
(Psalms 105:39 NKJV) He spread a cloud for a covering, And fire to give light in the night.

God wants us to Stay Cool / Yoke is Easy

God still directs us that way, He wants us to stay cool, He doesn't want us getting all uptight in our relationship and service to Him. Jesus said, my yoke is easy, my burden is light. God doesn't want to move you into any place that will cause a burden on your relationship with Him.
(Matthew 11:29 NKJV) "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
(Matthew 11:30 NKJV) "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

[Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"](#)

Ezk 44 – Linen & Wool / Every Decision (Live, Work, Marry) How Effect Relationship to Lord

In Ezekiel 44, they were told to wear linen only, no wool, God doesn't want us to get all hot and bothered in our relationship, ministry and service to Him. Can I make that point to you, not just which ministry to serve in, but yes for every decision you make in you life, whether it is where to live, what job to take, whom to marry, the FIRST question you must ask yourself, how will this effect my relationship and service unto the Lord, for if you are truly seeking first the Kingdom of God, your relationship and service to Him, will always be a part of any decision. How will this effect my spiritual growth, my study of the Word, prayer time, communion with Him, fellowship, church attendance, and ministry involvement? [Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"](#) I am amazed how many people make major decisions of life, and don't consider how it will effect their relationship with the Lord.

(Ezekiel 44:17 NKJV) "And it shall be, whenever they enter the gates of the inner court, that they shall put on linen garments; no wool shall come upon them while they minister within the gates of the inner court or within the house.
(Ezekiel 44:18 NKJV) "They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their bodies; they shall not clothe themselves with anything that causes sweat.

Look at Context of Matt 6:33

Look at the context of Matthew 6, and you will see that that all the other stuff we are talking about, is in that context, fiancés, family, etc:

(Matthew 6:28 NKJV) "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;
(Matthew 6:29 NKJV) "and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
(Matthew 6:30 NKJV) "Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"
(Matthew 6:31 NKJV) "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"
(Matthew 6:32 NKJV) "For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.
(Matthew 6:33 NKJV) "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Don't Sweat It / For Me Tired or Energy / Not Saying it always Easy

So in Ezekiel 44, God says I don't want you sweating, I want you to stay cool, stay under the cloud. So often something will be proposed to me for the church to do, or my home, a different job, and when I think of doing something it, immediately I get a burden, almost like I am tired, just

the thought of it makes me tired, that is a sure clue to me that it is my thoughts, not the Lords, for when God gives me something to do, He gives me the energy and excitement to do it. Now I am not saying it is going to be easy, I am not saying that it will not come without war (for we studied that last week – war is inevitable), but I don't start to sweat over the decision, I start to look forward to it, I have a cool refreshing outlook on the task ahead.

God put Desire There / God Initiator

The reason it won't be a burden is because God laid it upon your heart, and His yoke is easy and His burden is light, He won't ask us to do something that He hasn't equipped us to do. So that desire that is in your heart, God put it there. God is always the initiator, not us initiating and God responding (Ok God, I've been delighting myself in you, now give me that boyfriend/job I want; no, God says just enjoy your relationship with Me and I'll fill your heart with things that are better and beyond anything you could have thought of).

(Psalms 37:4 NKJV) Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.

(Psalms 37:5 NKJV) Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.

Father knows Best

Sometimes we treat God like a genie or like the fairy godmother who was at the anniversary party of a sixty-year-old couple celebrating their thirty-fifth anniversary. "Congratulations," the fairy godmother said. "I'm going to give you each one wish. What would you like?" "I would like to go on a world cruise," the wife answered. Poof! Tickets were in her hand. "What would you like?" she said, turning to the man. Pulling the fairy godmother aside, he said, "Frankly, I would like to be married to a woman thirty years younger than I am." Poof! He became ninety. We ask for the dumbest stuff. And the Lord loves us enough to say, "I'm not going to honor that request because you don't understand what you're asking for." I'm so glad we serve a God who can't be ordered around. I'm so glad our Father loves us too much to grant our petitions if He sees they will be harmful to us.

[Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this Desire stood the Test of Time?"](#)

God Lays It – You Will Continue / My Flesh it Fades / Major Point 2 – Test of Time

So when God lays something on your heart, and it is not a burden, but a joy. God's will is what you will want to do. If you are not in God's will, especially if you are in some habitual sin, you will not know or hear His will for you. What God lays on my heart, won't be what He laid on your heart, but because He put that desire in my heart, I can go on, while many others would quit. Do something that is your will, and not God's will, and you will burn out, fade away, and have a mess on your hands, and maybe others to. Here is how I know that my desire, is God's desire, and that is that over time, the desire never goes away. I find something that is of my flesh, fades away in a short time, it is a whim, and actually if it doesn't come to pass in a few months, I forget about it. But if it is of the Lord, it stands the test of time, it is something that just won't go away. [Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this Desire stood the Test of Time?"](#)

[Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"](#)

Must Not Strive / God will bring it to Pass / the Church / Major 3 / Stay Cool

Paul told Timothy, the servant of the Lord must not strive. If whatever you are doing, or thinking of doing, if you are continually striving, struggling over it, struggling to make it happen, sweating it out, ask yourself.....why is this such a struggle? If it is God's will, He will bring it to pass, no need for you to get all uptight about it. I continually find myself saying to the Lord, this is your ministry, this is your church, all I need is to stay in communion with Him, and whatever happens after that, is up to the Lord, no stress for me and I just keep cool in my linens. Now there are times when I find myself sweating, trying to whip something up in my strength, and I'll say, but I know this is important, this needs to be established or developed, and I'll get all in a sweat, get it done, get it out there, and find out, nobody wanted it, nobody needed it, it didn't help me as I

thought it would, all I did was lose sleep, and wasted precious time. Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, “am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?” Just relax, if it is God’s desire, He will make it happen, He will bring it to pass, He will open the door for you. You need only be ready to walk through the door when the opportunity comes. Keep cool my beloved.

(2 Timothy 2:24 KJV) And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

Went Up Orderly Ranks / If Confused – Wait

Back in verse 18 of Exodus it says that they went up in orderly ranks. Do you see there that there was no confusion, no chaos, all things were done orderly. God knew where He was leading the people. Imagine 3 million people, moving, and there was no confusion. There is a word there for us, that if we allow the Lord to lead us, then we won’t live a life of confusion. When you are striving, you will have confusion, and I can tell you either it is not God’s will, or it is not God’s time, and in both cases you need to just wait upon Him. And if it is the leading of the Lord, it will stand the test of time.

(Exodus 13:18 NKJV) So God led the people around by way of the wilderness of the Red Sea. And the children of Israel went up in orderly ranks out of the land of Egypt.

(2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV) For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Is it Cool:

- Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, “how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?”
- Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, “has this Desire stood the Test of Time?”
- Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, “am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?”

2.) Will it Count

Will it count, you see, God is doing something mighty here, God is establishing a nation, this is a whole new dispensation of His working, and what He is doing here will have eternal ramifications. The people under this cloud are more than just along for the ride, more than just getting to a new place to live and work (now out of Egypt), they are part of something bigger – God is bringing them into the land that will birth the Messiah, and will be the prophetic timepiece for major prophecies to come, as it deals with the people and land of Israel.

Acts 1 – In the Clouds / We Give an Account

Speaking of clouds, in Acts 1, we see that Jesus is coming back in the clouds. When He comes, you and I will stand before Him to give an account, not of our sins for that has been washed away, but we will give an account of what we did with the opportunities that He set before me.

(Acts 1:9 NKJV) Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(Acts 1:10 NKJV) And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel,

(Acts 1:11 NKJV) who also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

You Will care / Birthday Party / Millennial Kingdom

The day you stand before His throne, and cast you crowns at His feet, you will care. You may say I don’t care about casting crowns; I just want to make it. Trust me, you will be sorry, you will wish that you had something. It will be like showing up at a birthday party or get a Christmas gift without having one to give in return. Not to mention, what you do now, will determine what you will be doing in the Millennial Kingdom, for as you rule today, is how you will rule in that time. And if you don’t care now, you won’t care then.

(1 Corinthians 3:12 NKJV) Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

(1 Corinthians 3:13 NKJV) each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.

(Revelation 4:10 NKJV) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:

(Matthew 25:21 NKJV) "His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.'

When He Comes – What will He Find You Doing / Be All There

Let the cloud lead you in all your decisions. When He comes back in the clouds, will he find you serving Him, or serving yourself? When He comes, will you be seeking first the Kingdom, or seeking first what was best for you? Wherever you are, be all there, what ever you are doing, look at it and say is this bringing Him glory, how can I make it so it does bring Him glory. When He comes in the clouds, be able to say to yourself, I was busy about my Fathers business, I was seeking first the Kingdom, I made what I was doing count for eternity.

Live Life Backwards

As I always say, the key to living is to live life backwards. Live life backwards from heaven and you'll see how easy it is to decide if that thing, really counts.

[Major Point 4 when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"](#)

Will this Impact Eternal Things

So whatever you are considering, ask yourself, what impact will this make on the eternal things, or will this just satisfy my desires, my self-pleasures? When you weigh those things out, in the light of eternity, it will help you see if this is really your self-interest, or the interest of God. [Major Point 4 when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"](#)

Mt Transfiguration / Great Plans – Not My Plans

Remember back on the Mount of Transfiguration, after Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus, Peter gets all excited and says lets build 3 booths, 3 memorials, and the Lord interrupts him, and say this is My Son, hear ye Him. God was saying hey you got all these plans and ideas Peter, but it isn't about your plans and ideas, it is about My plans. For My ways are above your ways, and what I have for you is more abundant than anything you'll ever dream up. Peter I don't care about building buildings, I am going to use you to build me a body. For us, we just have to be honest with ourselves.

(Matthew 17:1 NKJV) Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;

(Matthew 17:2 NKJV) and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light.

(Matthew 17:3 NKJV) And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him.

(Matthew 17:4 NKJV) Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

(Matthew 17:5 NKJV) While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"

(Isaiah 55:8 NKJV) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD.

(Isaiah 55:9 NKJV) "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

(Ephesians 3:20 NKJV) Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

Ask Yourself:

Is it Cool:

- [Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"](#)
- [Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this Desire stood the Test of Time?"](#)
- [Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"](#)

Will It Count?

- Major Point 4 when considering your decision ask yourself, “who am I really doing this for?”

Does it Conform

As we had said (verse 18), they moved in orderly columns, and they moved together. To stay where God was leading, they had to stay in their columns, under His cloud. To go your own way, meant facing the consequences of desert heat, the beasts of the animals, and the armies of the enemies. It also meant missing out on the manna, and the water from the rock as we will read in chapters to come. In order to stay in the flow of where God was going, they had to conform and stay in their ranks.

Major Point 5 when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”

Does it Align with the Word

We have the same today, we have this Word to led and guide and us, be obedient to this word, and you will not be outside the camp facing the dangers just described. No some decisions don't even need to be prayed about. No you can't date that person they are not saved. No you shouldn't form that business with him because he isn't a believer. And on and on it goes, if it violates the word, the decision is clear. If it doesn't violate the word, or confirmed by the Word, then you have a Green Light to proceed. What does the Word say about missions, go. What does it say about ministering to the orphans and widows, do it, what does it say. The word is a lamp unto our feet, problem is we want a spotlight upon our head, we want to see the beginning and the end. Major Point 5 when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”

(Psalms 119:105 NKJV) Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

Major Point 6 when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”

War is Inevitable / Heb 1 – He Speaks / Ask for a Verse

As we saw back in verse 17 of Exodus, God took them the long way to avoid war, because they were babes. But we also saw that war, is inevitable, because our King is at war, so that means then we too are at war. Listen precious saint, I can not say this strong enough, and clear enough, if you are pondering a major life change, be assured, at some point war will come should you move forward with that change. New job, moving away, major ministry changes or something of the likes; can I encourage you in this, God speaks to His people today, through His Son, ask the Son to give you a word to stand on, so when the hard times come you can go back to specific moment and say I know this is hard, it even looks as if I made a mistake, but I remember the specific word the Lord had given me, and I knew this is what I was to do. That specific word may be a verse, a moment in prayer where you knew it clearly was the Lord, or maybe a brother gave you a word and it immediately sunk deep into your and you knew it was from the Lord. Ask the Lord, He will talk to you. Major Point 6 when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”

(Hebrews 1:1 NKJV) God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (Hebrews 1:2 NKJV) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

Cloud of Witness / Read the Stories

Speaking of clouds, we are told in Hebrews that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witness. You know we can read stories in the Bible of men and woman of God, and they can be examples for us, as we see they went through the same things we do. Search your Bible, and I will assure you that there will be and example, a word, of the very situation you are in. You need to balance with all the other Major Points, for we can name it and claim it because the Word says it, but God has more:

(Hebrews 12:1 NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

(Romans 15:4 NKJV) For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

(Romans 15:5 NKJV) Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,

[Major Point 7 when considering your decision ask yourself, "what does godly counsel say?"](#).

Wisdom in Counsel

Listen Christian, In the multitude of counsel there is wisdom. Do you seek out godly leadership in help for your decision, or not, because maybe you are afraid that they will say something that isn't what you want to hear. Don't ask every person in the Church, but have those few that you know and trust are led of the by the Lord, know the Word of the Lord, and have demonstrated their love for you. If you don't want to seek out godly counsel, I would say you need to examine yourself and ask why. [Major Point 7 when considering your decision ask yourself, "what does godly counsel say?"](#). The reason there is safety in the multitude of counselors is because others can step back and see things that you are too close to see. Or others have a spiritual maturity that is beyond yours, and just know things that you don't.

(Proverbs 15:22 NKJV) Without counsel, plans go awry, But in the multitude of counselors they are established.

(Proverbs 24:6 NKJV) For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, And in a multitude of counselors there is safety.

Need not Struggle

You need not struggle and strive with the leading of the Lord, for He desires to lead you. So in your decisions, large or small, think of these 3 groups, ask yourself these 7 questions:

Is it Cool?

- [Major Point 1 when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"](#)
- [Major Point 2 when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"](#)
- [Major Point 3 when considering your decision ask yourself, "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"](#)

Will It Count?

- [Major Point 4 when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"](#)

Does it Conform?

- [Major Point 5 when considering your decision ask yourself, "does it align with the Word?"](#)
- [Major Point 6 when considering your decision ask the Lord, "please give me a Word to stand on?"](#)
- [Major Point 7 when considering your decision ask yourself, "what does godly counsel say?"](#).

When all 7 Line Up

Well what happens when all 7 line-up, all 7 are green lights? Then it comes down to faith, and why we call this Christian Life the Great Adventure. But let me just say this, and make it real easy; when they came to Jesus, they said Master what are the 2 greatest commandments, and Jesus said love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, and soul. And, love your neighbor as yourself, in this is all the law and the prophets. Beloved, if you can do that, doesn't matter where you are or what you are doing, God is pleased.

(Matthew 22:37 NKJV) Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

(Matthew 22:38 NKJV) "This is the first and great commandment."

(Matthew 22:39 NKJV) "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

(Matthew 22:40 NKJV) "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

This Very Moment determine if in Will

Now If you ever wonder if you are in God's will at this very moment, then do these 2 things, and you will know that you are. If you are not doing them, then know you are not in God's will, and I can assure you, it isn't where you are at, or whom you are with, it is a condition of your heart that needs to be corrected. These 2 things move you into God's perfect will because, when you love the Lord with all your heart, mind, and soul, then you won't be indulging in habitual sin. Any person indulging in habitual sin, I tell them there is no way for you to know if you are where you are suppose to be, doing what you should be doing, and with whom you should be, if you are living in habitual sin. And, if you are loving your neighbor, you'll quit focusing on yourself, and you won't be apt to make the error of seeking first your kingdom.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Make Part of thought Process / More Peaceful Life – Sweeter Communion

So 3 groups, 7 questions to ask yourself when making decisions. I suggest to you to make them so a part of your thoughts, that they will constantly examine all your thoughts and actions and motives, and you will find yourself experiencing a more peaceful life, and sweeter communion with your Lord.

Two Visions – Same God!

Acts 9:1-19

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Saul – Orphan Maker / Sits in Darkness – Gracious God Coming / Picture of Christian

Well Saul, the orphan and widow maker, has been knocked off his high horse, face-first into the dirt as the Resurrected Christ has appeared before him. As we ended our last study, Saul has been led by hand to a house in Damascus and for three days will sit in darkness. Ananias, a devout man of God, will receive a call (in the form of a vision) to go speak to Saul. Ananias means "God is gracious", Saul means "desired", and thus we see the Gracious God coming to the man He desires, who presently is sitting in darkness. It is the summation of the entire gospel (good news), which is the loving and gracious God who loves you so, desires to come into your life, and take you out of darkness into his marvelous light. My, my how God loves you, He desires you, and I hope that grabs your heart right here and now, that you know that and experience that today:

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹But you are a **chosen** generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Both men Receive Visions / Help us Distinguish / the 7 Points

Well in our last study we saw that both Saul and Ananias received a vision from the Lord, and so we took an in-depth look at how we ourselves can discern and distinguish in our own lives the leading of the Lord; how to make the right decision when having to make a decision. We laid out seven points to consider and apply when we have to make a decision.

When considering your decision ask yourself

- **Is it Cool?**
 - Major Point 1 - "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"
 - Major Point 2 - "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"
 - Major Point 3 - "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"
- **Will It Count?**
 - Major Point 4 - "who am I really doing this for?"
- **Does it Conform?**
 - Major Point 5 - "does it align with the Word?"
 - Major Point 6 - "please give me a Word to stand on?"
 - Major Point 7 - "what does godly counsel say?"

See 2 Examples in Saul & Ananias / Bible full of Examples

Well in our study today we see two men receiving a vision from the Lord, and as we had said last week the Bible is full of examples for us, and the Lord gives us examples of two men having to determine if what they are thinking is really from the Lord, or just themselves, and we will see

them both apply these seven points, and thus we have a great example to study for our own lives today. Lets read verses 1-19 for context and then come back and break it down.

(Hebrews 12:1 NKJV) Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

(Romans 15:4 NKJV) For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

(Romans 15:5 NKJV) Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus,

Why so Much Time on this Subject

You may be asking yourself, Ray why are you spending so much time on this topic? I'll tell you the answer, I am totally tired of watching Christians make bad decisions, such bad decisions that it not only affects them, but it affects others around them (especially the children). As I said last week, the days that we live in, our margin for error, is zero. We cannot afford to make mistakes, because Satan has an abundance of weaponry now (with the internet, television, Hollywood, unsaved people) to take our little mistake and turn it into a canyon that we have to then fight our way to get back out of. Before it was valleys, but now it is mountains. My warning is not new, Paul pleaded with the people (*carefully follow my doctrine*) for perilous times are going to get worse and worse (and they have):

2 Timothy 3:10-15 (NKJV) ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—*what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.* ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

2 Timothy 3:1-9 (NKJV) ¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.

(Acts 9:1 NKJV) Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

(Acts 9:2 NKJV) and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:3 NKJV) As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven.

(Acts 9:4 NKJV) Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

(Acts 9:5 NKJV) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

(Acts 9:6 NKJV) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

(Acts 9:7 NKJV) And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

(Acts 9:8 NKJV) Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

(Acts 9:9 NKJV) And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

(Acts 9:10 NKJV) Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

(Acts 9:11 NKJV) So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying.

(Acts 9:12 NKJV) "And **in a vision** he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

(Acts 9:13 NKJV) Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:14 NKJV) "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

(Acts 9:15 NKJV) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

(Acts 9:16 NKJV) "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

(Acts 9:17 NKJV) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 9:18 NKJV) Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

(Acts 9:19 NKJV) So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

Let's Compare the Visions

So let us compare the two visions these men had been given from the Lord, and we will see that they each received a unique vision, but the principles for discernment and application were the same (our 7 points), even though each man were almost on two completely opposite sides of the spectrum (Saul in his infancy state, Ananias in a mature state). I hope what you will see is that having the discipline and diligence to use these godly principles in your everyday decision making (small or great decisions) apply to every Christian at every and every stage of their Christian walk.

When considering your decision ask yourself

Is it Cool?

Major Point 1 - "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"

Simply, and it is a simple evaluation, how will this affect my relationship to the Lord, and we see both men freely offer themselves to the Lord when the Lord spoke. Saul says what do you want me to do, and Ananias said "here I am, Lord". Both men present themselves to the Lord in the form of, I am Yours, a Master and servant relationship. I want to do what you want me to do, I present myself to You, for I know being close to You, doing Your will, is the best thing for me. Please, please Christian whether it is to take that job or not, should I go on the mission trip, or what you are going to watch on television (or your kids are going to watch), ask how will this affect my (my kids) relationship to the Lord. Will it draw me closer, or will it draw me away. Will it quench my Spirit, or will it ignite my Spirit on fire. Both Saul and Ananias clearly saw that God was drawing them closer to himself, and they both offered themselves freely.

Saul - (Acts 9:6 NKJV) *So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Ananias - (Acts 9:10 NKJV) *Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said **in a vision**, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."*

Major Point 2 - "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"

Well Saul spends three days in the dark on his word from the Lord, I don't think his was hard to discern, but Ananias' really doesn't have time to wait to see if his vision stands the test of time, the Lord's command for him required an immediate response. Now how do we apply those calls that require immediate response. Well I'll tell you this, Ananias was a devout man (Acts 22:12), and for God to call him that I can gather certain things about him, and that is that he would have been a man of prayer, a man who sought after the Lord. There is a fruit that comes with the discipline of a continual and steady prayer and devotional life with the Lord, and that is that it becomes easier and easier to hear the voice of the Lord speaking to you (Matt 6, 1 Peter 3). The

best thing we will ever do for ourselves is to stay consistent in our devotional life, for then we will have communion (oneness) with Him, and be able to hear Him clearly. Enoch is the greatest example, he walked with God, just as a man walks with his friend. But I have another point to add to that, and I'll make it when we get to point 7 about "godly counsel".

Saul - (Acts 9:9 NKJV) *And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.*

Ananias - (Acts 9:17 NKJV) *And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*

Acts 22:12 (NKJV) ¹²*"Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,*

1 Peter 3:12 (NKJV) ¹² *For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers;.....*

Genesis 5:24 (NKJV) ²⁴*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him.*

Matthew 6:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. ⁸"Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.*

Major Point 3 - "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"

I think this was a no brainer, Saul could easily see his state of turmoil and unrest when he was persecuting the saints, so he knows that was striving and now he has been knocked off his high-horse, so I think that was easy to compare the two. As for Ananias, it this would have been easy for him, because he would be like "I'd rather not do this", so the striving was pretty clear – he is asking the Lord, "are you sure about this". Point four is a key determinant to help us decide if we are striving to make something happen.

Saul (striving) - (Acts 9:1 NKJV) *Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest*

Saul (being led) - (Acts 9:6 NKJV) *So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."*

Ananias - (Acts 9:13 NKJV) *Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.*

Will It Count?

Major Point 4 - "who am I really doing this for?"

A.W. Tozer said, *God is looking for men in whose hands his glory is safe.* God will not share His glory with any man.

God answers this one for them both real clear, this man is going to be used in a great and mighty way by the Lord. Ananias surely wasn't doing this for himself, there wasn't anything in it for him, but he was willing to take the risk for the sake of the Kingdom. Remember Ananias next time you share your faith, you never know where the next Paul is coming from, and although we may not produce the next Billy Graham (or maybe you will) that one person may change a person and that person changes a person, and so on and so on, and that one person you had a part of changing, was the beginning of a string of dozens or even hundreds.

Both Saul & Ananias - (Acts 9:15-16 NKJV) *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (16) "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

Mr. Kimball

A Sunday School teacher, a Mr. Kimball, in 1858, led a Boston shoe clerk to give his life to Christ. The clerk, Dwight L. Moody, became an evangelist. In England in 1879, he awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of Fredrick B. Meyer, pastor of a small church. F. B. Meyer, preaching to an American college campus, brought to Christ a student named J. Wilbur Chapman. Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player, Billy Sunday, to do evangelistic work. Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, N.C. A group of local men were so enthusiastic afterward that they planned another evangelistic campaign, bringing Mordecai

Hamm to town to preach. During Hamm's revival, a young man named Billy Graham heard the gospel and yielded his life to Christ. Only eternity will reveal the tremendous impact of that one Sunday School teacher, Mr. Kimball, who invested his life in the lives of others.

Does it Conform?

Major Point 5 - "does it align with the Word?"

Aligning with the Word, well both men would know Joel's prophecy (and Peter reaffirmed that prophecy:

Acts 2:16-21 (NKJV) ¹⁶*But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

¹⁷ *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God,
That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your young men shall see visions,
Your old men shall dream dreams.*

¹⁸ *And on My menservants and on My maidservants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days;
And they shall prophesy.*

¹⁹ *I will show wonders in heaven above
And signs in the earth beneath:*

*Blood and fire and vapor of smoke,
²⁰ The sun shall be turned into darkness,
And the moon into blood,
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.*

²¹ *And it shall come to pass
That whoever calls on the name of the LORD
Shall be saved.'*

And, both men would know that God's word was that He would forgive sin (Saul even got to hear Stephen ask God not to charge Saul with his death. Paul could be assured that what he was hearing was from the Lord, for the Lord promised to remember a person's sin no more. But really, it took equally as much faith (the word) for Ananias to believe also that God is that forgiving of a God.

Saul - (Acts 7:59-60 NKJV) *And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (60) Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

Jeremiah 31:34 (NKJV) ³⁴*No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."*

Major Point 6 - "please give me a Word to stand on?"

God did! As Ananias would be walking on the way, knowing he was coming face-to-face with a murder, and a licensed murderer at that (as he was getting away with it as Roman Law did nothing to stop it), Ananias would need this word to stand on, as he would be going what he could have considered to be the lion's den. But Ananias could stand on the words, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel".

Both Saul & Ananias - (Acts 9:15-16 NKJV) *But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. (16) "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."*

When the hard times come upon Paul, he will have this word to stand on. When he is shipwrecked, when he is beaten, when he is imprisoned, he will always have this word to stand on. Beloved ask the Lord for a Word, because war is inevitable for anyone who desires to follow him. Satan will come, for he hates you because you remind him to much of Jesus.

Major Point 7 - "what does godly counsel say?"

In both visions there is no mention that either man sought godly counsel, and this ties in with the point about standing the test of time, and that sometimes God says now, not next week or next month. What I want you to see for both of these men is that their godly counsel, was God Himself, as we see both of them dialogue with God, speak and ask the Lord questions. Christian, it is ok to engage and discussion with the Lord, for faith comes by hearing and hearing by the

word of God. He wants to talk and fellowship with you. So ask Him, Lord am I hearing you right about, is this what you want me to do. Lord I want to be pleasing to you, speak to me. Because, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, so as you dialogue with the Lord, as He brings confirmation upon your heart, you will have the faith to go do whatever it is that He has called you to do. Now, it is ok to ask more, but when all is confirmed, time for talk is over, and it is now time for action, so get moving. While you are moving, keep talking, and while you are talking, keep moving.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Saul - (Acts 9:5-6 NKJV) And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." (6) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

Ananias - (Acts 9:13 NKJV) Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. (14) "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." (15) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

After it Lines up – Step Out – Have some Fun

Hey, after it all lines up, it comes down to faith, just stepping out and going for it. Christian have some fun, take some chances.

It's fun to hear God & Listen to Him / Ireland T-shirt

It is fun to listen to the voice of God. Little things, He will even talk to us about little things, not just who to marry, where to live and work, but even what to wear. Yes, several years ago I was on my way out the door for a Pastor Conference, and while I was getting dresses I felt the Lord say to me to wear my T-shirt that had Ireland stuff on it. I blew it off thinking it was just me. But while I was out the door, half way to the elevator, the Lord spoke again, "I told you to wear the Ireland shirt." So I went back inside, changed my shirt, and went to the conference. Later that night day, a guy came up to me and said hey can I talk to you about that T-shirt. Comes to find out that he felt the Lord was laying on his heart to be a missionary in Ireland, and I was able to share with him about several of my mission trips, give him some people to hook up with, and next thing ya know is that he and his wife were missionaries to Ireland.

Christians, have some fun, take some chances, Christianity is an exciting life to live, and hearing God and responding, wow it years later and I still remember all those times I heard Him speak, and saw it come to pass in a great and marvelous way.

SO - When considering your decision ask yourself

- **Is it Cool?**
 - Major Point 1 - "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"
 - Major Point 2 - "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"
 - Major Point 3 - "am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?"
- **Will It Count?**
 - Major Point 4 - "who am I really doing this for?"
- **Does it Conform?**
 - Major Point 5 - "does it align with the Word?"
 - Major Point 6 - "please give me a Word to stand on?"
 - Major Point 7 - "what does godly counsel say?"

Saul – Chosen of God (9:10-31)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knocked off High Horse – 3days Dark / Hard to Dispute it All just a Story

Well Saul has been knocked off his high-horse, he has been sitting in darkness in a home in Damascus for 3 days now, and now the Lord is going to put the final touches on his conversion. It is an amazing conversion considering that he goes from consenting to murder, making widows and orphans, to a follower of Jesus Christ. To me one of the hardest things for any skeptic to refute is the conversion of Saul. I ask them if Jesus was just a man (which is historical fact), then how do explain Saul's conversion? Why would he go from persecutor to becoming persecuted? Why would he give up his position of respect, authority, and prosperity – to a life of being beaten, disrespected, and poverty, all for a made-up story? That is a tough one to explain away.

Saul mentioned in Early Writings

By the way, just as Jesus is in the history books, so is a man named Saul of Taurus (aka the Apostle Paul). We find mention of him by the early church fathers:

Clement of Alexandria, The Epistle of S. Clement to the Corinthians, Chapter 5 (AD 94,95)

*"Let us set before our eyes the good Apostles. ...By reason of jealousy and strife **Paul** by his example pointed out the prize of patient endurance. After that he had been seven times in bonds, had been driven into exile, had been stoned, had preached in the East and West, we won the noble renown which was the reward of his faith, having taught righteousness unto the whole world and having reached the farthest bounds of the West; and when he had borne his testimony before the rulers, so he departed from the world and went unto the holy place, having been found a notable pattern of patient endurance."*

Ignatius of Antioch, To the Romans, Chapter 4 (August 23, 97 AD)

*"I do not enjoin you as **Peter and Paul** did. They were Apostles, I am a convict; they were free, but I am a slave to this very hour."*

Polycarp, Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians, Chapter 3

*"For neither am I, nor is any other like unto me, able to follow the wisdom of the blessed and glorious **Paul**, who when he came among you taught face to face with the men of that day the word which concerneth truly carefully and surely; who also, when he was absent, wrote a letter unto you, into the which if ye look diligently, ye shall be able to be builded up unto the faith given to you, which is the mother of us all, while hope followeth after and love goeth before--love toward God and Christ and toward our neighbor. For if any man be occupied with these, he hath fulfilled the commandment of righteousness; for he that hath love is far from all sin."*

Greatest Historical Evidence of Saul Real – Is the Bible / 162 Archeological Proofs

However, some would argue in the validity of the writings of the early church, and that is fine if that is their challenge, and thus I present one of the most conclusive proofs that Paul was a real-life person, and that is the Bible. Oh not for those who believe the Bible is the word of God, but how historical evidence (in the form of historical writings and archeological finds) prove the validity of the Book of Acts. There are 162 archaeological discoveries that correlate Acts 13 - 28 to the Apostle Paul's mission trips. Dr. Colin Hemer's scholarly work shows a correlation between what is written in the book of Acts to the archaeological records. The calculated probability of the book of Acts being an absolute myth is less than 4 chances in 10 billion, billion, billion, billion (4.13×10^{37}). ([see article at end of study for these statistics](#)).

There are evidences which includes:

- city, regional, and provincial political boundaries, some of which existed only in the middle of the first century, the era of Paul's travels.
- political titles, Roman and local, in the various cities and provinces of the empire.
- social and political characteristics unique to the cities and provinces that Paul visited.
- archeological findings that have a bearing on the biblical narrative.
- distances that Paul traveled on land and on sea, and how long it took to cover those distances, according to the scriptures and to ancient and modern testimony.
- meteorological and nautical evidence relevant to Paul's travels by sea, including the spectacular confirmation of the details surrounding his shipwreck on Malta.
- Paul's arrests and trials, and the legal maneuverings that took place in quite different jurisdictions, studied in the light of evidence about ancient law.
- Paul's dealings with noted individuals who are also written about in pagan and Jewish historical accounts.
- a comprehensive examination of the complex evidential relation between Paul's letters and the book of Acts.

Modern Day Example

The modern day example of this would be that someone made a story up about a man name "Stuart Rickenbacker" who was a great evangelist. The story would talk about how Stu ministered to the saints in the USA when there was this major economic earthquake going through the county, and in detail would talk about how people were losing their homes to foreclosure. The account would give detailed account how it rippled into the stock market, and then caused the government to come up with a 1 trillion dollar bailout. Then Stu got on an airplane and flew to the Former Soviet Republic of Georgia (an 8 hour flight with a layover in London), and Stu preached a crusade to a hurting people who had just been invaded by Russia (no longer the former Soviet Union). Russia came in swiftly as directed by their president who no one really remembers his name because he is just a puppet under the Prime Minister who was the former President by the name of Vladimir Putin. After that Stu went to Beijing China, for they had just finished hosting the Olympics. He had to stay a few extra weeks because he couldn't catch a flight back to the States because there were 3 hurricanes back to back hitting the country. Now throw in 150+ more exact (for 1 error exposes the whole story as a lie) examples of those ones. So basically everything was historically accurate, even down to the time it took to fly to Europe and that Delta Airlines always connected in London before going on to Georgia, so everything is exact, except the man Stuart Rickenbacker was just a made up character. Imagine how hard that would still be today, living in the information age, now rewind the clock 2000 years and try doing it with no internet, abundant libraries, or daily news delivered to your front door. The calculated probability of that story being an absolute myth is less than 4 chances in 10 billion, billion, billion, billion (4.13×10^{-37}).

Saul's Story is Our Story

So, I love hearing stories about personal testimonies, and I would love to have Saul put his testimony up on YouTube, for as we read, it is quite the story. Saul's conversion, life, and ministry is no different than any of us in this room today who are Believers and followers of Christ.

We see Saul:

- Chosen of God
- Serving God,
- Growing in God
- Target because of God
- Misunderstood in God

– sound familiar? Saul's life is our life, just at a different degree, but at any degree, we have get to read a wonderful real-life example, and a wonderful personal application example for ourselves today. So let's pick it up at verse 10.

Chosen of God

Saul was chosen of God, just as you and I are and were.

Saul is Baptized

(Acts 9:10 NKJV) Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said **in a vision**, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

(Acts 9:11 NKJV) So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying."

Straight – still a Street in Damascus

Straight Street is still in Damascus. It's the main road that runs east to west through the downtown section of this, the oldest city in the world (see picture).

How know a Person Converted? / 2 Tale-Tell Signs (what do & Praying) / Spiritual Appetite

How do you know when a person is converted? Well I can never say exactly how, but I'll give you a few strong tell-tale signs. First, he says to the Lord, "What do You want me to do?" (and then they actually do it). Secondly, they continue talking to the Lord. So we see Saul doing both. You know when a person is physically ill, one of the questions the doctor always asks is, "how is your appetite?" It is a good question to ask that person who professes Christ but that is as far as it goes; so ask them, hey how is your spiritual appetite; do you hunger after the things of the Lord? If you have no spiritual appetite for the things of the Lord, it is very likely that you are spiritually ill. This isn't a statement of judgment, for as a doctor isn't passing a judgment, but a diagnosis, identifying the illness, and then giving a prescription or necessary procedure to bring health back to the body. I would say that to anyone sitting here today also, myself included, regardless of how sure of our salvation we may be, if we have no appetite for the things of the Lord it is clearly a indicator that we are not well spiritually – not a judgment, but a diagnosis, so that you may do what is necessary to bring health into your spiritual well-being.

(Acts 9:6 NKJV) So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do."

(Acts 9:11 NKJV) So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying."

Verse 7 – Others Heard – not See / Some the Word is Sounds – Others a Response

In verse 7 there were a group of men who heard but didn't see. They heard, but they didn't hear like Paul did. This happens every day, and it may be happening right now as I speak; for to some they hear, but it is just sounds to them, but to others (like Saul) the words become the Word of God, and it produces a response in their heart, it brings them to the place of hearing, to ask, now what do I do with this Word of God that I just heard. They hear, and some causes change in their life, but for others they only hear, but nothing take holds, and nothing changes. **Same experience, but some come away with God, others come away with nothing.** Every time the word of God goes forth, it is meant to bring a response in the hearers heart (Isaiah 55).

(Acts 9:7 NKJV) And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

Grain of Wheat

If you keep a grain of wheat in your pocket, it will look exactly the same ten years from now. But place it in the right environment -- some good ground, enough water -- it will sprout into a living sheaf of grain! Every kind of life requires its particular corresponding environment in order to achieve its full and predestined potential. It's no different with the seeds of the fruit of the Spirit in our hearts! God has readily made available to us the seeds of success. He gives us the opportunity to live a life of much fruit! A life abounding in the fruits of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith and self-control. But here they are -- just seeds -- sitting in our pocket -- waiting 'til we decide to plant them and allow them to become trees of plenty in our lives. Is your soil fertile and ready? Let's plant some seeds today and invite the Lord to water and nourish them so that we can produce fruit one-hundred fold for the Kingdom. There's so much work to be done!

Matthew 13:23 (NKJV)²³But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty."

(Acts 9:12 NKJV) "And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight."

(Acts 9:13 NKJV) Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem.

(Acts 9:14 NKJV) "And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

Ananias – Judas / Lord Redeeming names as He Redeems People

It's interesting that the Lord used a man named Ananias to be the instrument of Saul's recovery and that Ananias was to go to the house of Judas. Ananias and Judas are two names that are infamous in the New Testament. Judas was the betrayer of Jesus. Ananias was the liar of the early church (Acts 5). And certainly the name Saul doesn't exactly conjure up images of spiritual perfection! The Lord is doing something neat here, I think: He's redeeming names even as He continues His redemptive work in people.

No matter how Bad your Name Was / Just ask – What will you have me Do!

So no matter how bad of a name you have made for yourself with some of the things you may have done, God will redeem your name. Now it may take some time, but God can and will redeem your name, give you a new testimony, but you need to be on board with what He is doing, and you need to be saying to Him, "Lord what is it that You want me to do?"

(Acts 9:15 NKJV) But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.

(Acts 9:16 NKJV) "For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake."

Saul being Chosen - No Greater than Yours or Mine

God's statement about Paul is no greater than the statement He makes of you and me, we are a chosen vessel as much as Paul was, you are priceless in the sight of the Lord (for there is no price that can be put on the blood of God's only begotten Son):

*1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV)⁹But you are a **chosen** generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.*

Ever Study Dispensations – Some Say Saul wrong for Witnessing to Jews

Verse 15 - to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel - If you ever start studying "dispensations", and theology, you'll read many of the scholar's debate if Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, and Peter the Apostle to the Jews. They will use their dispensations to say Paul was wrong for trying to preach to the Jews (because he was called to the Gentiles) and thus why he found himself shipwrecked, or beaten, or imprisoned, and we need to take note of that because that is what happens when you don't listen to the Lord and try to do your own thing, striving to make something happen.

Verse 15-16 Saul Called to the Three / Point #6 – Give a Word to Stand on

I say to all that, verses 15-16, God clearly says that Paul was called to both the Gentiles and the Jews. And, that bad things would happen to him. Let verse 16 dispel that misconception that if things go bad, we are out of God's will and are doing something we shouldn't be doing. God tells Paul (in his vision) that he will suffer many things for his witness for Christ. So what you have here, is point 6 of our 7 points, Lord give me a Word to stand on. When the hard times came, when Paul was being beaten, shipwrecked, imprisoned, he could go back to this vision and say, it is alright, this is exactly what God said would happen, and I can stand tall, and stand strong in the battle because I know I am in God will. Christian, get that Word from the Lord when you need to make those decisions for war will come, it is inevitable, and when the battle wages you will have that Word to stand on, and you will not be moved.

2 Corinthians 11:22-28 (NKJV) ²²Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. ²³Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; ²⁷in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.

(Acts 9:17 NKJV) And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."
(Acts 9:18 NKJV) Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized.

Not Brutal Saul – but Brother Saul / 90 Day Probation period / HELP them See Clearly
Not "Brutal Saul" or "Bruiser Saul," Ananias called him "Brother Saul" because Ananias immediately accepted the fact that Saul was a brother regardless of his previous spiritual blindness, regardless of his present physical blindness. May we be an accepting people like Ananias. Too many people want the New Believer to have a 90 day probation period before they will accept them. Ok you say that you are saved, but I'm going to keep an eye on you just to make sure you are for real. No, we should go to them like Ananias did, and start helping them to see clearly.

Saul never Forgave Himself / What a Touch must have Meant / Doubt we can Grasp
Saul never really forgave himself for the things he had done to the innocent, all the pain he had caused, the destructions of all those families, all the widows and all the orphans he made. Yet here comes a man that calls him brother, and touches him. What that touch must have felt like to Paul, after 3 days in darkness (is this friend is it foe?), 3 days seeing the faces of all those that he had slaughtered, and then a gentle loving hand comes and touches him, and says Brother Saul. I don't think we can truly grasp all that the touch from Ananias meant to Saul.

1 Corinthians 15:9 (NKJV) ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

When I 1st Saved / How I longed / CCAAC – Please Reach Out / NOT Here – NOT Ever
I remember when I first got saved, went to church, and nobody wanted to touch me, nor call me brother. I was so excited about the Lord, and being saved, but for almost 12-18 months I had to enjoy it alone for most people in the church didn't want to touch me. How I longed so much for the church to receive me, but I knew I was a little too rough on the edges, was too fresh out of the world for them to be comfortable with me. How I longed for someone to reach out to me, to lovingly embrace me, and say "brother". Oh precious saints of CCAAC, please, I beg of you, please reach out with that loving and gentle touch to every person that comes to this place, and embrace them in love and acceptance, and may no one ever leave here like I had to leave week after week for 52 weeks, wishing someone would love and receive me – just as I am, even where I had came from. **Please, not here, not ever, not this church.**

Saul a Brother – Not yet Empowered

Notice that although Saul was a brother, he was not yet empowered with the Spirit. Although some argue this point, I believe the Book of Acts clearly depicts an empowering subsequent to salvation.

(Acts 9:19 NKJV) So when he had received food, he was strengthened. Then Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus.

Picture Saul showing up at Church / UBL – Bin Laden / Even Apostles has Doubt

Just put yourself in the picture; it would be the same as us and our normal group that gathers here every Sunday, and then I show up with Usma Bin Laden, and say hey guys UBL just gave his life to the Lord and wants to fellowship with us. This is a radical day for both Saul, and the

group of believers that received him. Some of the people present in church that day may very well have been people who were displaced from their homes in Jerusalem because of Saul's on-slaughter to the Believers of the Way there in Jerusalem. When Saul gets to Jerusalem later it says the Apostles were frightened of him (aka they had a hard time believing that God would save Saul and that Saul would be willing to accept Christ); the Apostles were the pillar of the church and they were afraid, I can only image the followers there in Damascus.

(Acts 9:26 NKJV) And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

Saul did Wise Thing – Got in Fellowship / Saul's Old Friends Challenge God Accept him

Paul did a wise thing, he immediately surrounded himself with godly counsel. New Believer (any Believer), you must get plugged into a local church and get yourself under mentoring as soon as you possible can so you can assure you success in Christ. You can be sure that there were Saul's old friends who were saying are you crazy fool, even if Jesus was real do you think He would accept and then call you, do you know how horrible a person you are. Paul got into fellowship, and I am sure that he knew that he could, because of one man's touch (Ananias), and those words (Brother Saul).

Hebrews 10:23-25 (NKJV) ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Serving God

Now we see Saul immediately wanting to tell others about Christ. Thus begins his life of ministry and we will spend the better part of the second half of this book talking about his service to the Lord.

Saul Preached Christ

(Acts 9:20 NKJV) Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

(Acts 9:21 NKJV) Then all who heard were amazed, and said, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?"

Growing in God

Saul we will begins to grow in the Lord, and as he does he will confound the wise more and more.

(Acts 9:22 NKJV) But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Amazed but not Converted

The Jews in Damascus were amazed—but they weren't converted. They were confounded, but not persuaded. But they were cut to the heart, for we see in the next verse they've heard enough, and plot to kill him

Targeted because of God

As Saul grows in the Lord, he will become targeted because of his great witness for the Lord, as men are convicted of their sin, and want to silence this new John the Baptist (if you will). It seems the world will never get tired of silencing the John the Baptist's that God gives them, but as soon as they silence one, God brings another. Lord, may we be the next John the Baptist in the life of those around us.

Saul Escapes Death

(Acts 9:23 NKJV) Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him.

What a Picture of the World / Blood Brother – Thick and Thin / Don't be Surprised

What a picture of the world. How someone can claim to your blood brother, promising to stand by you through thick or thin, saying they will die for you, but then you give your life to Christ and they spit on the very ground you stand. Saul served the Jews so faithfully, no doubt a legend as he led his personal crusade to kill the followers of Christ, but now – he is a follower of Christ and all his friends and fans have turned against him. You know Christian, don't be surprised when you sell-out for Christ, how old friends will become new enemies, or at the least (new critics). I remember when I got saved, and I got sold-out shortly thereafter, I lost track of how many (aka) friends said, "I miss the old Ray". Some flat out said, "I don't like the new Ray", and many basically told me, "don't come around here no more." Probably my best childhood friend, we played as babies in the crib together as our mothers visited together, some twenty+ years of spending nearly every weekend together (standing side-by-side in bars, fights) and his last words to me (through my sister) were, "tell Ray to go to hell, all he ever wants to talk about is Jesus Christ." Twenty+ years of friendship, gone.

Before you go – Ray Blew It

And if you sit here today and say well you blew it Ray, you came on too strong, you must have been legalistic and critical. I'll tell you I have I have never been a fire and brimstone person, all that I have ever done is verse 20 – *immediately I preached that Jesus is the Son of God.* However as I increased more in strength, as I grew in wisdom and knowledge, that is when things began to change. As long as I was weak in the things of the Lord, no one really got too concerned, but when I grew, and I could "prove" that Jesus is the Christ", that is when friends began to turn on me.

(Acts 9:22 NKJV) But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

Somewhere in Verse 21-23 / 3 Year Gap / Schooled in the Desert

Somewhere in these verses 21-23 There is about a three-year gap where Saul goes into the desert alone with the Lord. At least two years of which he goes to Arabia (Gal 1:15-18). Saul will join the likes of others who were schooled in the desert, like Moses and Elijah. A.W. Tozer said, *God is looking for men in whose hands his glory is safe.* God will not share His glory with any man.

Galatians 1:15-19 (NKJV) ¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. ¹⁸Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

As I continued to Drink with Them – It was Ok / But the Day I Increased in Strength

So for me, as long as I continued to drink beers with them, I could stay as long as I wanted. They even enjoyed to engage me, "so Ray – what is up with all this Church stuff". Oh we had lively and friendly conversions about abortion, politics, sin, the blood, and the cross. But that day that I increased in strength, the day I quit drinking with them, that day I quit gossiping about whoever wasn't there, that day I quit fornicating, that day I quit cursing, that day that I presented a "sanctified life, the fruits of repentance", that was the day that everything changed, when I had grown in strength, confounded them, convicted them, that is when it all changed..

Christian Don't be Confused – Those that Once Adored You

Christian don't be confused when the people who once adored you, maybe even idolized you, turn on you; don't consider that strange, and don't be confused. But you may want to be concerned if they think nothing of your profession – that is when I would be concerned.

Those who have been Spurned – You are in Good Company

For those that have experienced the spurning and attacking of those who once esteemed you so highly, you are in great company, you are in the company of the Apostle Paul, not to mention Jesus Christ Himself.

Although they not Love You – Keep Loving Them / Wait for their Damascus Road

And although they may not love you anymore, keep loving them, keep the door open for their Damascus road experience, and maybe you will be the one who is blessed enough to go to them, lay hands on them, call them brother, or call them sister, and get to help them see clearly.

(Acts 9:24 NKJV) But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him.

(Acts 9:25 NKJV) Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.

Ministry not Always what we Think / No 1st Class

So here is the chosen vessel let down over a wall. Ministry may not always work the way you think it should, especially if you think you should travel in first-class because you are a servant of the Most High.

Paul exults this Basket Experience

Interestingly, back in Paul's dissertation of all his sufferings that we had read prior, he closes out by referring back to this event in the basket. It is almost as if he is putting this event as his number one "To God be the Glory" boasting of his life. Yea I was shipwrecked three times, yea I was left for dead after being stoned, yea I was scourged with 39 brutal lashes (5 times), yea I was beaten with rods (3 times), but you want to hear something total amazing, once they had to let me down over the wall in a basket to escape a murder plot against me.

2 Corinthians 11:30-33 (NKJV) ³⁰If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity. ³¹The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³²In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me; ³³but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

Can't speak for Saul / Street Ministry in California

Obviously I can't speak for Paul of why he ranked this basket experience as one of the greatest moments in his Christian life, if not the greatest moment. But I remember early in my Christian walk of such a moment (per se). One time I was witnessing on the streets in California, and I came to an intersection and I felt the Lord say to me, cross over to the right. Well I looked over the street, all 4 lanes with all kinds of traffic, and then I looked left which didn't require crossing the street and fighting the traffic, and so I went left (path of least resistance). I made it all of about 10 steps and I heard the Lord speak again, "I told ya to go right." So I made an immediate u-turn, fought the traffic, walked two blocks and there were these 4 teenagers with their dad waiting for the bus. I gave them all tracts, asked dad if I could share the Gospel, and he says sure go ahead, and 10 minutes later all 4 of the teenagers were praying to receive Christ.

Validates – God is In It

Why was that such a big deal to me? Not just because God spoke to me, but what He spoke in, and that was the ministry. By God speaking to me as He did, I walked away that night, and still carry it with me to this day, and that is the knowledge that God is in this with me. It is not me trying to do something that I read, and I'm out there trying to do it on my own, but that God is in it with me. By God directing, by God intervening, I have the confidence of, "hey I am not in this alone, in fact, it isn't even my "thing" it is all the Lord's. All the other things that happened to Saul (shipwrecked, beaten, stoned), God delivered him in and through them all. But here in Damascus, very early in Saul's life, God is showing Saul, hey I am in it with you, we are doing this together, and there in Damascus, God was saying to Saul, "I delivered you for it all", all the other other things you will experience, I delivered you in Damascus for it all – for I am with you.

I Am with You / You are not in this Alone

I believe if we slow down, take a look back, we will all see times in our lives where God intervened in a special way. Maybe it was in a ministry you were involved in, maybe it was something with your employment, your kids, your spouse, but I believe God gives us moments in our lives so that we can clearly see – I am with you:

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Date of Conversion

The reference to Aretas the king dates Paul's escape from Damascus between 37-39 AD. Taking into account the three years mentioned in Galatians 1:18, and that this incident happened at the end of those three years, we can surmise that Paul was converted sometime between 34 and 36 AD.

Misunderstood in God

Now we close to something I think we all face many a times, and that is when other Christians misunderstand us. When we mean well, want to bless, but somehow we are misunderstood.

Saul meets with the Disciples in Jerusalem

(Acts 9:26 NKJV) And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple.

(Acts 9:27 NKJV) But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

(Acts 9:28 NKJV) So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.

Disciples don't Buy It / Barnabas – Son of Consolation

The disciples didn't buy Paul's conversion story. Only Barnabas, whose name means "son of consolation," said, "Hey, boys, give Saul a break. He really has had an experience with the Lord. I saw him in Damascus preaching Jesus Christ." Beloved, be a "son of consolation" to someone, especially those that the church is keeping at a distance, you go and bring them comfort and consolation.

Imagine that Conversation between Peter and Saul

Imagine Saul and Peter having a conversation together. We have almost two extremes. Peter was lead to the Lord by his brother Andrew. Saul had this amazing Damascus Road experience.

(Acts 9:29 NKJV) And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him.

Gutsy Man / God's past Demonstration – Gave Faith for Risk Taking

Saul is one gutsy man, he knew death was possible, for he himself had been there to vote to kill Stephen. I believe it was God's past demonstrations of power (the basket over the wall), that gave Saul faith to trust that his life was in God's hand.

The Church Prospers

(Acts 9:30 NKJV) When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.

(Acts 9:31 NKJV) Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.

Saul to Kings – but not Yet

Although God personally told him that he would witness to Kings, it didn't mean that it would be immediately. Saul will be in Tarsus for several years. God's timing is the perfect timing. So whatever time table sets for you, whether it is one year or twelve years, it will be the perfect timing that God has for you and the plans that he has for you.

Galatians 2:1 (NKJV) ¹Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me.

Saul to the obscurity for the next 7-10 Years

The churches were edified and multiplied—when? When they got rid of Paul. Paul, who had such a heart for the people of Israel, was finally sent out of Israel, into Gentile territory, where he would spend the next seven to ten years living in obscurity in Tarsus.

Maybe you can relate. Maybe you were saved ten years ago, and you had such vision, such desire to be used in ministry or service. You thought, I'm tailor-made to do this, or, I've got a call upon my life for this. And you tried. But it just didn't work out. Maybe for the past ten years, you've been waiting, wondering, Is the Lord ever going to use me?

Be of good cheer! The man who would turn the world upside down—the most important preacher of all time, the most powerful person who has ever lived except for the Lord Jesus Christ—had to first experience shut doors, shut doors, shut doors, and ten years of sitting in Tarsus while the Lord reworked and rewired him. If the Lord is doing that in your life, don't be discouraged. Don't throw in the towel. Don't walk away. Let Him do His work and have His way. Go with the flow. Put away your agenda. Get back to basics and say, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Saul's Story is Our Story

Saul's conversion, life, and ministry is no different than any of us in this room today who are Believers and followers of Christ. We see Saul, as we see ourselves so often:

- Chosen of God
- Serving God,
- Growing in God
- Target because of God
- Misunderstood in God

The Apostle Paul – Was he a real Person?

from skeptic & persecutor of Christians . . . to the greatest Christian missionary

Three logical guidelines support that Saul of Tarsus, supreme skeptic and persecutor of Christians, became the greatest Christian missionary as the Apostle Paul. Each guideline is discussed below. Each guideline is credible by itself, yet enhances the other two guidelines.

Guideline of Independent Attestation

The **Guideline of Independent Attestation**: requires us to have unique authors write about the Apostle Paul, independent of each other. Three independent authors are identified below:

1. **Independent Author of the book of Acts**: Luke identifies Saul of Tarsus who becomes the Apostle Paul. More than half of the book of Acts is devoted to Paul's conversion and mission trips. In addition, Dr. Colin Hemer's scholarly work shows a correlation between what is written in the book of Acts to the archaeological records. The calculated probability of the book of Acts being an absolute myth is less than 4 chances in 10 billion, billion, billion, billion (4.13×10^{-37}).

Due to the credibility of the book of Acts, the probability for the Apostle Paul's story is very high. The archaeological discoveries related to the book of Acts also correlate to the Apostle Paul. This adds 162 items into the calculation that support the life of Paul.

2. **Independent Author of 2 Peter**: Peter identifies the Apostle Paul and discusses Paul's writing. ". . . *our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction*" (2 Peter 3:15-16).
3. **Independent Author, the Apostle Paul**: Due to Paul's mission work, he wrote 13 epistles. Nine of these were addressed to local churches Paul had helped to establish. Three epistles are referred to as Pastoral Epistles. And one is address to a fellow Christian (*Philemon*) about a runaway slave named Onesimus, who had become a Christian.

The written evidence recorded before the end of the 1st century gives us three independent sources that support the existence of the Apostle Paul. But the greatest contribution to establishing the biblical character known as the Apostle Paul are the archaeological discoveries that match the written text in the book of Acts.

Guideline of Dissimilarity

The **Guideline of Dissimilarity**: For the early Christians, Saul of Tarsus was a nemesis since an educated person went about persecuting Christians. Paul's esteemed position inferred that the Christians world view was based on error. However, this changed drastically to the positive side when Saul of Tarsus was confronted in a blinding spiritual experience on the road to Damascus and became a Christian.

The logical guideline of dissimilarity validates Saul of Tarsus as a skeptic that came to believe in Jesus despite his advanced education.

Guideline of Contextual Credibility

The **Guideline of Contextual Credibility** relates to authors who wrote about Jesus as close as possible to when Jesus lived. Did the author know Jesus in person? Or did the author know people that knew Jesus in person?

The case for the Apostle Paul is strengthened since he wrote 13 epistles due to his mission work. And scholars accept these epistles as being written between ~51 to 66 AD.

The book of Acts was written about AD 62 based on Dr. Hemer's work showing a correlation between the texts and archaeological records.

The Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter sometime between 65 to 68 AD since Peter was martyred by 68 AD.

How Credible is the Apostle Paul?

Based on the evidence presented above, how certain can we be that the Apostle Paul actually existed as a skeptic of Jesus that became an outstanding Christian missionary and was eventually martyred for his faith in Christ?

To evaluate the probability of the Apostle Paul, I use a statistical tool referred to as a **chi-square test of independence**. This is the ideal tool since it is an enumeration statistical tool that simply adds up the number of items that would support the existence of the Apostle Paul.

To use this tool, we must state a hypothesis that can be evaluated with known data. Then we can test whether the data supports if the hypothesis is true or false at a calculated confidence level.

Chi-Square Test of Independence

Even the most liberal theologians will acknowledge the validity of the Apostle Paul. Theological perceptions about the Apostle Paul range from extremely negative to extremely positive. But they all agree that the Apostle Paul was a historic personality that spread the Christian faith across the Roman Empire. The primary reason for this acceptance is due to the fact that the archaeological records match the book of Acts so closely and the fact that Paul wrote so many epistles.

Due to the wide acceptance of the Apostle Paul, I will simply calculate a probability by assuming that someone may not believe that the Apostle Paul existed as a skeptic, then became a Christian and spread the Christian faith. Therefore, let's hypothesize by stating that "**the Apostle Paul is a myth due to no supporting evidence**." Having made that statement as the hypothesis, we simply calculate a level of confidence that the hypothesis is true or false.

Since the hypothesis is "**the Apostle Paul is a myth due to no supporting evidence**," we would expect to find zero evidence supporting that the Apostle Paul actually existed.

This leads to a math-based problem in the chi-square test of independence. Since we are

expecting zero events, we must be able to divide by zero, which is impossible. How can this problem be solved?

There is a viable math-based answer. Anytime the chi-square test of independence expects zero to be the answer, the inverse calculation must be done. Of course, the answer will need to be reversed when applied to the hypothesis after the calculation is done.

Since this method most likely confuses most people, I will walk through this problem with you by example. We expect zero items since the hypothesis is that the Apostle Paul is a myth due to no supporting evidence. But the research cited above reveals there are 3 credible independent authors, the negativity that Saul of Tarsus as an educated man persecuted the early Christians, 162 archaeological discoveries that correlate Acts 13 - 28 to the Apostle Paul's mission trips, and the fact that Paul wrote 13 epistles before the year 66 AD. In addition, the authors wrote these books between 51 to 68 AD, which supports contextual credibility for a total of 15 items. Therefore, we have a total of 181 items that support the Apostle Paul existed.

The inverse calculation would be the same as expecting 181 items, but finding zero items. Therefore, let's do the calculation using 181 as the expected value and zero as observed value, which is done below:

Hypothesis The Apostle Paul is a myth due to no supporting evidence				Chi-square Value
Observed	Expected	(E - O)	(E - O) ²	(E - O) ² /E
0 true	value	(Expected minus Observed)		
0	181	181	32,761	181

The chart above shows that we expected 181 items and observed zero. This yields the following values of 0 (Bottom Left Corner Above). The difference between the expected (+181) and observed (0) is +181 units (Middle Column Above). The number +181 is squared to equal 32,761. The value of 32,761 is divided by the expected value of +181 to yield a chi-square value of +181 (Bottom Right Corner Above). What does the value of +181 mean?

The analysis supports that the hypothesis (*The Apostle Paul is a myth due to no supporting evidence*) is false. We can conclude that the Apostle Paul was a real personality. The probability of the Apostle Paul being a mythical person is less than 3 chances in a 10,000 billion, billion, billion, billion (2.9×10^{-41}). The primary reason for this conclusion is due to Paul's epistles and the archaeological records that correlate to the book of Acts. This leads us to a very important question.

Did the Apostle Paul's experience on the road to Damascus with a blinding light spiritual experience with the resurrected Jesus actually occur?

This is where faith is required.

We can state that the Apostle Paul was a real historic person at a high probability level. And it appears certain that the Apostle Paul met with other New Testament characters such as Peter, James, Luke, John and many other apostles.

But all this does not prove the spiritual stories to be true. The reason being that the spiritual experiences of the Apostle Paul are subjective and cannot be confirmed by archaeology.

Nevertheless, the probability levels infer that the Apostle Paul did in fact meet Jesus on the road to Damascus as the resurrected Messiah. The analysis done herein supports that biblical faith is credible. The Apostle Paul did exist with about 8 chances in 10,000 billion, billion, billion, billion, that this would be false.

This analysis leads to a very important conclusion: "**Any biblical character referred to in the book of Acts did exist and did as Luke recorded. But the spiritual stories require a small amount of faith to accept.**"

Just Like Jesus

(Acts 9:32-43)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Paul Tucked Away / Focus on Peter 9-12

With Paul tucked away in Tarsus, the focus returns to Peter for next few chapters up to chapter 13 where Paul will become the main focus pretty much all the way through chapter 28.

Peter so much like Jesus / Ever been there- Hang out with Jesus – Act like Him

I like these several verses here because we see Peter, being so much like Jesus in all that he does and say; and that shouldn't surprise us for the more a person hangs out with Jesus, the more they become like Him. How about you? Have you ever been there? In the word, soaking Him up in prayer, and then a situation happens, whether it is giving counsel to a person in need, and opportunity to share the gospel, extending a helping hand to someone in need, or dealing with a personal situation in your own life, and you find yourself (because you spent all this time with Him) just responding exactly as He would. We see that in our two stories today as Peter heals a lame man, and raises a woman from the dead.

Hence why we came Here / The Word becomes Flesh Again

Hence why we come here each week, not so that we may go through the Bible, but the Bible will go through us, the Word that became flesh, will become flesh again as He takes up residence within us, has His way with us, then flows from us.

[Peter heals Aeneas who was Bedridden](#)

(Acts 9:32 NKJV) Now it came to pass, as Peter went through all parts of the country, that he also came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda.

23 miles from Jerusalem

Lydda is about 23 miles from Jerusalem (See Map).

Peter on the Move / Jesus on the Move – Keeps us from being Stagnant / Paul rub off?

It is good to see Peter on the move (if you will), for it seems that up until now we only read of him in Jerusalem. So Peter, so much like Jesus for we seen in the life of Jesus that He was always on the move, oh not just geographically, but even when He was in the same location for any extended period He was still always on the move. It is good to be on the move (even if we never leave our geographical area), for being on the move will keep us from becoming stagnant in our Christian walk. Now I wonder if Paul had some affect on Peter being on the move too. I wonder if it was Paul's zeal for the lost that rubbed off on Peter.

Love being around New Believers / Love new Christians coming In / Keeps us Moving

I wonder if it was Paul's zeal for missions that got Peter on the move. Speculation for sure, but one thing I am sure of personally is that I love being around new Believers. I love the zeal they have for sharing the gospel, I love the excitement they have for talking about God's Word, and I love their passion they have for worship, it is like they could sing of His love forever! I also love it

when solid mature Christians come here into our fellowship, for I like to ask them how did they do such-and-such in your last church (hmm that is a good idea maybe we should consider doing that too). Of course there is also that point we have discussed before, God many a times moves people on so as to stir them up. Maybe they were getting complacent in their last church, or maybe not, it was just time to move them on so they could get stirred up to face some new challenge, which would then require them to seek God in a new way. In all the cases I love it when God does that too, for we all need a little stirring from time to time, to get things (or keep things) moving in our lives and our church.

Young Churches make Request for Apostle / Had OT – No NT / 1 John 1 / Invest Self

These young churches no doubt were making request for the Apostles to come and share the word with them. They had the Old Testament (but no New Testament yet), and they wanted someone to come and share with them who had walked with Christ, saw Him in action, heard Him speak, watched Him heal. For all that are in here today, when you get a chance (not if – because I can assure you will), when the opportunity comes, take the opportunity to get involved in a new or young believers life. For they haven't seen what you have seen, nor heard what you have heard, concerning the things of the Lord. As you get to share with them the time God spoke to you, and you obeyed, and saw Him do a mighty work in your life and/or through your life; and as you share with them those things, it is 1 John 1 all over again, it is the Book of Acts all over again. Christian invest yourself into the lives of others, both those under your roof, and those who live under another roof.

1 John 1:1-4 (NKJV) ¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— ²the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

Passes all Parts – Man in Motion – Looking for Opportunities

Verse 32 - as Peter went through all parts of the country - “Peter passed through all quarters, so we see Peter was on the move, a man of motion, a man looking for opportunities. So, too, today—when the Lord wants to use a man or a woman, He'll use someone who, like Peter, is on the move, looking for ways to serve Him. When you do, you will see and experience things like Peter did, and it is always exciting. As I always say, “you can't make ministry happen, but you need to put yourself in a place where ministry can happen”. We have to look for those opportunities and put ourselves in the way of them.

(Acts 9:33 NKJV) There he found a certain man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years and was paralyzed.

Peter – Big Gun – 1 on 1 / Jesus did It / Christian never lose the Place

I'm so blessed and challenged and intrigued by my brother Peter. Even though he was the “Big Gun in Jerusalem,” here we see him ministering to people one at a time. Peter just like Jesus, preaching to the multitude, calling Zaccheus down from a tree; feeding 5,000, calling Lazarus out of the grave. May whatever it is that you are involved in, I pray that you never lose that place of ministering to people one at a time. I say that especially to you here who feel called to go out from here and start a new work, make sure you keep yourself in the place you can still minister one at a time.

(Acts 9:34 NKJV) And Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed." Then he arose immediately.

Nearly Exact Phrase as Jesus / Never go Wrong

Nearly the exact phrase Peter had heard from Jesus. You'll never go wrong with doing things the way you saw Jesus did it, nor repeating the same Words Jesus did. When you give counsel to bring healing or help to someone, you'll never go wrong giving them the Words of God, for they shall not return void (Isaiah 55). The mental help professionals can challenge and attack me all they want, but I'll never leave this place, and that is that it is the Word of God that changes lives,

not the words of man's wisdom. I use to be nice when I responded to their challenges, but I find myself not being as gentle with them as I once was. Below are God's word on man's wisdom (1 Cor 2). Also, good news, you don't have to say exactly what Jesus said, just exactly like Jesus said (as we see Peter was not exact, but exactly like), so for those of us who aren't the greatest at Bible memorization, there is some good news for today.

Mark 2:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹"I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house." ¹²Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me void,
But it shall accomplish what I please,
And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (KJV) ⁴And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: ⁵That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:13 (KJV) ¹³Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Exact Grammar – Could see Healing Happening / My Co-worker in Car Accident

The exact grammar Peter says here is, "the Lord Jesus Christ is right now at this moment healing you". Peter saw something here, it appears that he had a vision that he could actually see God healing this man. One time like years ago one of my co-workers got in a car accident, while at the hospital they ran x-rays where the body was bruised from the car accident, and while doing it they saw a tumor. So they scheduled a follow-up examine to look into further once she was healed from the car accident. So she told me the story at work, and I said let's pray, and as I prayed it was like I saw a tumor in her body, and in my mind I saw the tumor disappear. After her examine I asked her, well what is the word on the tumor, and she said, "it is gone". I never told her what I saw, for even to this day I really don't put too much into it – it was just a neat moment for me. Did God heal her as I prayed, or did God show me what He was going to do later, I don't know, but I enjoyed the moment and have never had a moment like that since.

I will tell You – Every time Share the Gospel, Addiction, Stronghold

But I will tell you what I do have, and I have it every time I share the gospel, or give godly counsel to someone with a bondage or strong hold in their life, and that is that in my mind I see a person getting saved, or breaking free from that bondage or stronghold. In my mind I know that if they will heed the Word of God, and yield to the Spirit of God, and hear the voice of God, they will have triumph in that area.

Word always God's Enabling / Always Dumbfounded when a person Refuses

The Word of God is always the enabling of God, and if that person so chooses, they will be enabled to have victory. Every time I get to share the whole gospel with undivided attention, as I do in my mind I am saying there is absolutely no way any person could refuse this. I am always dumbfounded when I give solid godly counsel and the person fails to apply it.

Every Physical Miracle – Spiritual Application / Rise giving you Victory Today / No Provision

Every physical miracle in the Bible has a spiritual application behind it also. Jesus had said to the lame man He had healed, take up your bed, and here Peter says to this man, make your bed. It appears to be that this man had been bedridden in his home for 8 years straight. Now mind you that the homes of the common everyday people were not like our American homes where we have 3 bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, etc; rather they had one room and depending on the time of day it served as the living room, or the kitchen, and in the evening it would then serve as a bedroom. Well in the morning the bedroom was used as a couch in the now living room, but not in this home because for 24x7 it serves as a bedroom. Peter is saying to this man, make the bed, turn it into the couch, for it the living room time right now, you no longer need it at this time of day for a bedroom for you are healed! So it is that the Lord comes to you and me today and says exactly what Peter said to Aeneas, "Rise. I'm giving you victory today. I'm healing you of that

lame sin with which you've been involved. Now make up your bed and don't expect or provide for any relapse whatsoever." Get rid of it, don't allow any of it to lay around. Don't expect or provide for any relapses once so ever. Do not make any provision for the flesh (Paul would write the same to us). Too many Christians leave the door open for relapses after God has given them the victory. God has victory over drinking, but I'll keep a 6-pack in the fridge incase a friend drops by to watch the game. God has given victory in the area of purity, but I'll keep that person's number stored in my cell phone. God has given victory in getting into the word and prayer, but Monday nights are bowling night with all my old party buddies. God says, "make your bed", don't give no provisions for relapses, nor make any provisions for the flesh.

Romans 13:14 (NKJV) *¹⁴But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

Word – Always God's Enabling

The Word of God is always the enabling of God!

(Acts 9:35 NKJV) So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

Aeneas well Known / Peter like Jesus glorified Father in heaven

Aeneas it appears was well know and that many people knew him, as this testimony of God's power spread through all the area and people followed the Lord. Just a note, not only did Peter do what He see Jesus do when he healed the lame man, Peter obviously did it in the same humility of Jesus because God the Father received the glory:

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV) *¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

After Sickness in Lydda – Sadness in Joppa / Boy that the Christian Life / Cut Short Prsie

After finding sickness in Lydda, Peter found sadness in Joppa as we read next the story of Tabitha who had become sick and died. Boy the Christian life and Christian service can be a roller-coaster can't it. One day we are flying high, and then in a moment faced with sadness as sad news comes our way. Peter would have been walking on clouds immediately following this, and wouldn't it have been great to sit and celebrate with the people in Lydda over it, but sad news comes, have to cut the Testimony and Praise Night short at the 1st Church of Lydda, for there is sadness the next town over.

Peter Raises Dorcas from the Dead

(Acts 9:36 NKJV) At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did.

(Acts 9:37 NKJV) But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

Bad things = Even to Servants / My Stolen Bike after Missions / Witness without Words

Bad things happen to God's people in this fallen world, "even" faithful servants of the Lord. About a dozen years ago I was really into bicycling. I use to cycle 30 miles a day (6 days a week), which took 90 minutes, and that was perfect because I could listen to two 45 minute bible studies. I was growing leaps and bounds in the knowledge of the Lord, and I could eat anything I wanted and not have to worry about it (oh those were the good ole days (the eating part especially). Well I went on a mission trip to the Ukraine, and when I came home (me and my brother shared a condo), after some chit-chat, my brother says, I hate to tell you this but when you were gone someone broke into the garage and stole your bike. My bike, which was 500.00, my bike that had my training computer, my aero-bars, my gel seat, my foot locks, my bike that was one with me, gone! Gone while I was serving the Lord! Simple, pales in comparison to this story, but God showed me something through that whole thing, and that He showed me my brother's face as he told me, and I could read his face, and it was "how is he going to react to this". He was watching me like a reality show, what is he going to do with this news. Was I going to get angry, upset, yell at God (because he put two-and-two together, my bike was stole while I was serving God, why didn't God protect it for me. Five-hundred dollars was a lot of money for me, to this day I have never had a bike as nice as that one, but I was able to say through it all, in front of my brother, the

Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord, and I didn't get upset with God for not protecting my stuff while I was on the mission field. Yes a weak comparison to our story, but the point I make is that God allows, and God uses all things in our life to "*witness without words*".

Pastor Steve Smith / Witness without Words / Never Complained – Kept Serving

Pastor Steve Smith of CC Riverside NJ, a great man of God, he lead the inroads of CC missions to Ireland. It all started with him taking Bibles over and giving them out, to hundreds of missionaries going over, and now every year a crusade type festival put on by a group of CC. It all developed from Pastor Steve and a burden for the people of Ireland. What a servant, and what a shock to me when he died just recently of cancer. He served his church of 50 so faithfully, used by God to open missions to Ireland, dead in his late 40's. When he had cancer, he never complained or cursed God, never said I quit serving you, he was faithful to the end, and God used him to "*witness without words*".

Pastor Frank Appilitto / Witness without Words / Never Complained – Kept Serving

Pastor Frank Appilitto, CC Vineland NJ. Mighty man of God, used mightily by God in NYC after September 11th. Used by God at Virginia Tech after the shooting last year, in all those cases and many others he serves and leads on the Billy Graham Rapid Response Team of Chaplains. Faithfully serving his church, and it was a shock again to me to hear his wife was dying of cancer, and passed away last year. The whole time she suffered, he never complained or cursed God, never said I quit serving you, he was faithful to the end, and God used him to "*witness without words*".

Christian Reality Show

Bad things happen to nice people in this fallen world, bad things even happed to people who have been totally sold-out to the Lord. Bad things may happen to you or your family, and if they do may you "*witness without words*". May we all remember the world is reading us, watching us, the living "Christian Reality Show".

Soldier in Maryland Gazette

Did you see the picture in the Gazette this Wednesday of the soldier from Ft. Meade, now I don't know whether this man knows the Lord, but he sure does have a great witness without words when it comes to being dealt tragedy in this life. He lost his arm in the Iraq, and he wears a t-shirt that says, "I'm only in it for the Parking Space". That is an amazing attitude.

This Woman – Full of good Works / Verse 39

Verse 36 - This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did - Well, Tabitha was known for her good works. Hey what are you known as? Think about that if this was your story, what would they write about you? Tabitha has a great testimony, she was known for good works. When Peter enters the room we will read in verse 39, people start showing him the tunics and garments that Tabitha had made for them.

(Acts 9:39 NKJV) Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.

Christian Look for Ways to Serve / Chainsaw Ministry – Bucket of Hope

Christian, look for ways to serve. Here's a great clip out of the newspaper in Minnesota this week.

*Minnesota man visits Beaumont to sharpen Ike survivor chainsaws
By HUMBERTO MARTINEZ - September, 18, 2008*

As he drove around town, Tom Stanton, 53, listened for the sound of chainsaws. The large, bearded man stood on a Beaumont street corner, a sign near him reading "free chainsaw sharpening." The back of his red truck was loaded with tools and a clamp set up for the offered service. Since 2001, he's been visiting hurricane, tornado and other wind-disaster scenes, helping those in recovery that he said otherwise might be working harder than necessary. "There are a lot of people during a hurricane strike or even tornado strike that need their chainsaw sharpened," Stanton said. "A lot of people will put a lot of pressure on their chainsaw and tear up their chains. They'll use more strength, use more fuel and get less done than if they kept their chainsaw sharp." Stanton said he was in New Orleans after hurricane Katrina, where

someone estimated that he had sharpened over 2000 saws two weeks after it struck. He has been in Beaumont since Sunday, giving aid to survivors of hurricane Ike in Southeast Texas after helping residents of Louisiana with Gustav. He hasn't been home in 18 days. Giving survivors' tools a sharper cut is only part of Stanton's help though, he said. "A lot of times people just need someone to listen to them and I'm a good listener," Stanton said. During the process, he relates the sharpening to a bible verse. "Lots of people don't realize how practical the bible is, it's a good way to get to talking about spiritual things," Stanton said. "The bible talks about sharpening an axe in Ecclesiastes 10:9-10 'he who cuts wood with a dull axe is endangered thereby.' I have changed it to 'he who cuts with a dull saw is endangered thereby.'" Once he finishes sharpening a survivor's saw, he asks them to pull out from a "bucket of hope," where he has religious pamphlets. He said he hopes that people will take his religious message and find certainty in their spiritual futures. Stanton is a Chaplain with Calvary Chapel in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, where he owns a chainsaw sharpening business. He said has been sharpening chainsaws since he was 18 years old and his passion is the reason he helps people in crisis. "I enjoy sharpening things," Stanton said, "it's always been a part of my life."

Look for ways to do Good Works / Donuts 7\$ - Bucket of Hope / Ice Water in Brooklyn

Look for ways to serve others, be known for good works. I don't think it is hard, nor do I think it has to be time consuming, or expensive. Want to totally bring instant joy into your workplace, bring in donuts (\$7 a dozen). Go get some Nabisco Tollhouse pre-made cookie dough, and for 4 bucks and 30 minutes, you can make some killer chocolate chip cookies. Just think about it, and ask God to show you how you can do little blessings along the way, that make you become known "for good works". As you do, ask God to give you word, like the "bucket of hope", or likening the chain of the saw to something spiritual. It doesn't have to be preachy, it doesn't have to be about salvation, for the purpose is "for good works" and no good work will be left undone. We go to Brooklyn Park on hot Saturday's and give people ice cold bottles of water (24 bottles for 4 bucks – 2 bucks for ice). As we give them out we give them a tract called "thirsty" that speaks about how God satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst. Use a concordance to find a verse or bible story that relates to the good work you are doing.

Sweet Donuts

Hey here are some sweet donuts, Proverbs 16 says pleasant words are sweet to the soul, and the sweet word for today is Dunkin Donuts:

Proverbs 16:24 (KJV)²⁴Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Now you could use Proverbs 23 with your co-workers also but I don't think it will be as effective as Proverbs 16:

Proverbs 23:8 (KJV)⁸The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.

Be Creative – Spend Time with God

Be creative, spend some times thinking about it, and God is going to give you wonderful time of fellowship with Him, and a wonderful testimony of good works with you friends, family, co-workers, and neighbors.

(Acts 9:38 NKJV) And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.

(Acts 9:39 NKJV) Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them.

10 miles from Joppa

Joppa is about 10 miles away from Lydda (see Map).

Peter on the Move – Also Peter was Available

Not only is Peter a Christian that is on the move, he was a Christian that was available. That is one of the most important requirement for personal ministry. He didn't say, "I'm too big to minister to one dead woman. Do you think that's a good use of my time?" No, Peter responded to the need at hand. Maybe there's a dead person in your life—not physically but spiritually—whom the Lord wants to revive through you, as He taps on your shoulder and says, "Come quickly."

(Acts 9:40 NKJV) But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

Jesus did exact same Thing

Peter watched Jesus do the exact same thing, even the part of clearing the room of all the people:

Mark 5:40-42 (NKJV)⁴⁰And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. ⁴¹Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "**Talitha, cumi,**" which is translated, "**Little girl, I say to you, arise.**" ⁴²Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

1st Rising of the Dead since Jesus

This is the first raising of the dead in the Book of Acts, the first raising of the dead since Jesus had done it. Here is whom Jesus raised from the dead:

- the only son of a widow from Nain (Luke 7:11-14)
- the daughter of the religious leader Jairus (Mark 5:22-43)
- Lazarus (John 11:1-44)

Last NT Rising of Dead

The last raising of the dead in the NT was:

Acts 20:9-10 (NKJV)⁹And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

Spiritual Application of Physical Miracle / Put out the Mockers – if Breathe Something New Verse 40 - But Peter put them all out – Speaking of spiritual application to every miracle, Beloved, get rid of the mockers and the mourners if you want to see God breath new life into something in your life.

For Believer Today – Mockers will Say / Jesus moved Mockers – Before Moved in Daughter

Whenever Jesus wants to work in your situation, there will be mockers, saying, "It's not going to happen. What a joke. The Lord's not going to help you. He's not even real to you. He doesn't care anything about you." And these little voices inside of us, the voices of unbelief, of demons, or even of well-meaning friends, say, "Grow up. Don't expect a miracle." The laughers, the scorners, and the mockers were moved out before Jesus went in. Move out the mockers, gang. Believe the promises of God, quote Scripture, rejoice in advance, and anticipate His blessing, and when those mockers come into your life, move them out, don't give them audience, separate yourself from their counsel, from being on the inside of your walls, you tell them you'll have to wait outside, while I wait on the inside with Jesus, watching and waiting for Him to move.

God stilling rising the Dead – Room filled Today

God is still raising people from the dead today, and there is a room of people who have been raised from the dead.

John 11:25-26 (NKJV)²⁵Jesus said to her, "**I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.**" ²⁶**And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"**

(Acts 9:41 NKJV) Then he gave her his hand and lifted her up; and when he had called the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

(Acts 9:42 NKJV) And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

(Acts 9:43 NKJV) So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

Where did he Lodge / Like Peter we need to be Flexible

Where did he lodge? With a tanner. Because they dealt with dead animals, so unclean did the Jews esteem tanners that the Mishnah—Jewish regulation—stated that the wife of a tanner had the right to divorce him. Thus, the Lord's work with Peter concerning the issue of legalism began

in the house of a fellow whom Peter previously would have avoided completely. If we're going to be used individually and corporately, like Peter, we need to show flexibility within the parameters of Scripture—not bound by traditions or preconceived opinions—even if it means hanging out with tanners.

Chapter 10

Let the Walls Fall Down (10:1-16)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Doubt Fully Grasp / Prejudice of Jews towards Gentiles / Suppose to be Light

Well the walls will be falling down in this passage before us today. I doubt we can fully grasp and appreciate what is happening here in chapter 10 as the gospel now will spread out to the Gentiles, the non-Jew. To the Jewish man they would include in their morning prayer to God, "thank you for not making me a Gentile, a dog, or a woman". Rabbi's taught that Gentiles existed for one primary purpose: to fuel the fires of hell. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile woman his parents held a funeral service for him. To add to this feeling, consider that they are under the occupation of Rome, a nation of Gentiles. Thus, Jews had nothing to do with Gentiles except to hate them or take their money (Jews today say God only created the Gentiles so someone would pay the full retail price – haaha). If a Jew even accidentally brushed against a Gentile, he would immediately go home, burn the clothes he was wearing, and take a ceremonial bath. Jews did not talk to Gentiles. They did not care about Gentiles. They had no hope for Gentiles. But this was not the original plan of God. The prophets—particularly Isaiah—proclaimed very clearly that Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles and that God would bless the people of Israel in order that Gentiles might see the benefits of walking with Him (Isaiah 42:6; 49:6). But the Jews lost that understanding. They turned inward and thought Gentiles were good for nothing but to keep hell hot, they became elitist and self-righteous, that they were favored by God because of themselves, not His grace. Well God will be knocking those walls down today.

Isaiah 42:6-7 (NKJV)⁶ *"I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,*

And will hold Your hand;

I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,

As a light to the Gentiles,

⁷ *To open blind eyes,*

To bring out prisoners from the prison,

Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Isaiah 49:6 (NKJV)⁶ *Indeed He says,*

'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant

To raise up the tribes of Jacob,

And to restore the preserved ones of Israel;

I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles,

That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."

Imagine Vision Rcv'd – Gates of Heaven Open Wide / Sadly Christians have Elitist Att'd

Imagine Peter receiving a vision from God, that the gates of heaven are opened wide, not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles also. Sadly I might add that many Christians have that mentality today, that elitist self-righteous attitude, and they turn their nose up against the un-believer, rather than open their hearts to them. Let the walls fall down I say, let the walls fall down!

Peter called to Gentile Home – but God Preparing his Heart / Give new Understanding

Peter is going to get called to the house of a Roman centurion, a representative of the very same Nation that has Israel under occupation and oppression, a Gentile from a Gentile Nation, but God had been setting him up, preparing his heart, way before this vision. Here in Acts 10, God is

about to use Peter to bring salvation to the Gentiles. First, however, He must give Peter a new understanding. He must prepare Peter's heart. So what does He do? He gives Peter a vision, and that vision is weakening the base of the wall, and soon they will be tumbling.

Where did he Lodge – a Tanner / Like Peter we need to be Flexible

Where was Peter lodging? With a tanner. Because they dealt with dead animals, so unclean did the Jews esteem tanners that the Mishnah—Jewish regulation—stated that the wife of a tanner had the right to divorce him. Jewish law said the tanner had to live at least 50 paces outside of the town. Thus, the Lord's work with Peter concerning the issue of legalism began in the house of a fellow whom Peter previously would have avoided completely. If we're going to be used individually and corporately, like Peter, we need to show flexibility within the parameters of Scripture—not bound by traditions or preconceived opinions—even if it means hanging out with tanners. Let the walls fall down.

(Acts 9:42 NKJV) And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord.

(Acts 9:43 NKJV) So it was that he stayed many days in Joppa with Simon, a tanner.

8-10 Years since Go Therefore / God Preparing People & Places / God not in Hurry

Also, it is somewhere between 8-10 years later since Pentecost, since – Go Therefore! God is patiently preparing the people and the places for the breaking forth of the Gospel to the Gentiles. God is patient, extremely patient, and so too should we. Good word for any of you here today that feel called to the ministry, for I know for I have been there, a thought that I had to hurry up and get out there and get going because the world is perishing and the people therefore too; hey, God waited 8-10 years before He busted the Gospel loose unto the Gentiles, before He poured His Spirit out upon them, before He launched missionaries to the Gentile land. Eight to ten years for the GOSPEL! So wait on the Lord, don't get ahead of Him, let Him prepare your heart, and the heart of those He will send you to – be patient.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

So God is Working on Peter / Clear Word – for not all Thrilled / No Coincidence Joppa

Well God is working on Peter's heart, ten years in the work no doubt, and the Lord is putting the finishing touches on Peter's heart, for Peter is going to need a clear and defined Word from the Lord, for not all (aka – Jews, saved and unsaved) are going to be thrilled. I think it no coincidence that Peter is in Joppa when the calling comes. I would imagine Peter would be reminded of Jonah catching a boat out of Joppa to get away from having to be the one that would proclaim God's offer of forgiveness to the city of Nineveh if they would repent. Maybe Peter walked down to the shore line himself thinking about catching a boat out of Joppa, for this message he knew would come with many challenges from the Jews.

If we Used – Need to be Flexible / Escape preconceived Notions / New Wine – Old Skins

If we're going to be used individually and corporately, like Peter, we need to show flexibility within the parameters of Scripture—not bound by traditions or preconceived opinions—even if it means hanging out with tanners. One of the things Peter would have seen all around Simon the tanner's workshop would have been wineskins, for that was one of the leading products a tanner made and sold, and I wonder if they reminded Peter of Jesus' teaching on you can't put new wine into old wineskins. God was saying the old things have passed away, behold I am making all things new. Let the walls fall down.

Matthew 9:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Cornelius Sends a Delegation

(Acts 10:1 NKJV) There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, (Other translations for Regiment say Cohort or Band)

(Acts 10:2 NKJV) a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

Caesarea – Roman HQ

Caesarea was the headquarters of the Roman government for the region of Israel under occupation.

Cornelius – Legion, Cohort (Tribune), Centurion / Noncommissioned Officer / Tough

Cornelius was a centurion meaning he was over 100 men. A Roman Legion had 6,000 men in it, then within each Legion there were 10 cohorts which had 600 men in it. Over the cohort was a Tribune. In each cohort were 6 groups of 100, which was lead by a centurion. Now the Tribune were like our West Point graduates, but the centurion was like a Master Sergeant in our military, who didn't get their rank by going to college, but got it by working their way up through the ranks, field tested, life experienced. They started as foot soldiers and worked their way up through experience and demonstration. They proved themselves in real-life situations, not through text-book and lectures at the university. So this centurion a tough dude, had authority and respect. They were brave of heart, sound of mind, and strong in discipline.

Centurions always spoken of Favorably

Interestingly, every time a centurion is mentioned in the New Testament, he is always spoken of in a favorable light.

- It was a centurion in Luke 7 who caused Jesus to marvel when he said, "I am not worthy for You to come under my roof. Just speak the word and my servant will be healed" (see Luke 7:6, 7).
- It was a centurion in Matthew 27, who, upon witnessing the crucifixion of Jesus and the events that followed said, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54).
- And here is Cornelius—yet another centurion whom God will use.

God sends Peter – Cornelius still not Saved / Religious – Alms - Prayed

Now it is important to note that God is going to send Peter to Cornelius because although Cornelius was devout (which means "religious"), although he feared God, gave alms (taking care of the poor), and he prayed to God, even though Cornelius did all those things, he still wasn't saved, and thus God had to send Peter to him to bring him to salvation. There are so many "Cornelius" around us today, so many people who because they are "religious", fear God in that they won't use His name in vain, know He is God, they help feed the poor, and they pray, they still aren't saved because they have never been introduced personally to the Savior.

It wasn't enough that he was religious, that he prayed daily, for there are many a religions today that are devout, they pray daily (even 3 times a day), they take care of the poor, they maintain a religious routine faithfully, but they are not saved because their sin hasn't been dealt with, and they haven't received the Savior. Let the walls fall down, the walls of religion!

(Acts 10:3 NKJV) About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

(Acts 10:4 NKJV) And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?"

So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

(Acts 10:5 NKJV) "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.

(Acts 10:6 NKJV) "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

9th Hour = 3pm

The 9th hour is about 3pm in the afternoon.

God sees and Hears – Meets Cornelius / One of Top Challenges – Person in Jungle

God sees, God hears, God was taking note of the desire of his heart, and has sent an angel to meet with him. One of the top ten challenges you hear from people when you present the Gospel

to them is, “well what about the person in that remote part of the world who has never heard of Jesus, are you telling me they will go to hell because they haven’t received Jesus”. Now of course they really don’t care about those people, they are just trying to challenge the message so they don’t have to repent, but if you have ever wondered that yourself, and you wonder about God’s love for them, then grab on to this story and recognize that God will seek out that man or woman who are desiring Him. God will send an angel if need be to them, or a missionary, or maybe even you, to tell them about Him. You can tell the person who challenges the point of the people in the remote jungle, “hey I am glad that you have such a heart for those people, and you really care for them, and just as God has sent me to you because he cares for you, He will send someone to them because He cares for them as deeply as He cares for you,can I ask you a question, do you think yourself a good person?”

God has all the Details – will move all the Pieces / God knows – Comfort or Concern

God has all the details, and God will move all the pieces to answer the desire in Cornelius’ heart. Notice the Lord knows Cornelius’ name, the Lord knew all about his prayers and giving, the Lord knew where Peter was staying, and what address he was at (the house of Simon the tanner). This should bring us great comfort in knowing that God knows all the details, it might also concern you when you recognize, God knows all the details in our lives.

(Acts 10:7 NKJV) And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

(Acts 10:8 NKJV) So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

They Probably thought Cornelius off deep End

Imagine what this must have sounded like to these three men. I wonder if these men thought Cornelius went off the deep the end.

Peter’s Vision

(Acts 10:9 NKJV) The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

Noon Time / Rooftop like our Decks / Sleep in Cool Breeze

So about noon time is the 6th hour. In those days many of the rooftops were made into a living place. Much like our porches and decks today; and in the hot summers they would often take a mat up there and sleep in the cool summer breeze looking at the stars.

Quiet Place for Quiet Time / When in Nicaragua / Beloved – Find a Place / No Interrupts

So Peter picks a nice place to go have some quiet time. When I was in Nicaragua, Thursday night was prayer night at the church and it always started with 30 minutes of silent prayer, and the reason being is that the average home had one or two rooms, and was filled with five or six people. Finding a quiet place to pray was hard to do. The application for you today is to do what Peter did, to do what they did in Nicaragua, and that was to find a quiet place where you can pray (hopefully uninterrupted). If the television has the potential to interrupt you (because you are tempted to watch it) don’t pray in that room, computer too. Find a place to pray that you can pray uninterrupted.

Let’s be Brutality Honest – Not that busy, or kids / BECAUSE Don’t Believe / My Jobs

But lets us just be brutally honest here today, we can say that we don’t pray because we are too busy – we kid ourselves. We can say that we don’t pray because we can’t focus – that is called warfare or laziness. I will tell ya why the average Christian doesn’t pray, and that is because we don’t believe, we don’t believe that prayer really changes things. James says it is the prayers of faith that work (James 5:15); but do we really believe that prayer works? If we did, we would be eager to pray! Everyday I get up and drive to the airport and spend 8 hours working for a company, because I really believe that every month they are going to give me money for doing it.

I really believe that I am going to get something out of it, there will be a return on my investment for getting up early, spending my time, and doing the work. Even after 10 years of working for them, good report with my bosses, I just couldn't hang out around my house, watch television, cruise the internet, sleeping in every day, and never show-up at the airport, and then at the end of 30 days expect that they would send me a paycheck. I'd be a nervous wreck because I would know that eventually I am going to be broke. I would have to wake-up and get in there to work because I know there is a value for doing so.

James 5:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Put in our Minds – It Does Matter / Petitions – Intercede - Thanksgiving

Christian we have to put it in our minds that prayer really does matter, that God really is listening, that we really are talking to the Almighty God of the Universe, and that He is interested in hearing us, and desiring to talk back to us.

- We must believe that what we ask for in our petitions and requests, that He will either say yes and move in power, or say no and give us a peace in the no.
- We must believe that when we intercede for someone or something that hell is bound at that moment and God is on the move to accomplish His will in the matter. And thus it will either be peace or power for us.
- We must believe that as we worship and adore Him in a period of praise and thanksgiving that His glory is being revealed to us from heaven, that His Holy Spirit is coming down upon us, and I will not have either peace or power, BUT peace AND power, as the Living God is moving through my very being.

Truly believe – Prayer never put back-burner / Once Experience P&P – Always find Time

If we truly believed those things with all our hearts, prayer would never be a back-burner, get around to it, if time permits thing ever again. For when we believe, those periods in our lives where we say prayer is the most important thing that I will do tomorrow, and we experience that peace and power, then we will always find the place, we will always find the time, the belief will energize us to have the energy, and the laziness of our flesh will be no match against the belief of the power of prayer. Is prayer hard? You bet because it is spiritual warfare, and war is never easy, but if you want to see walls start falling, go to war, go to prayer, and watch the walls start to tumble around you.

Jesus – Luke 18 / Pray & Faint / Never Faint as long as Pray

Jesus said in Luke 18, men ought always to pray and not faint. And I will give you the promise that *“men will not faint as long as they pray”*.

Luke 18:1 (NKJV) ¹Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

Find a Rooftop

Find yourself a rooftop Christian.

(Acts 10:10 NKJV) Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

Sound Familiar – Settle in and Remember / Keep notepad next to Desk

How familiar does that sound? Get settled into a time of prayer and say, hmm I am hungry, or could go for a cup of tea, or more so for me I finally remember I need a new battery for the car (should I go on-line and see if Sears is having a sale), or I need to finish off my Sunday School lesson. Never fails that during prayer my mind continually has pop-up messages coming in. So what I do is I keep a piece of paper and jot down what came into my mind, and I won't have the anxiety that I'll forget (so I better do it now), so I jot it down so I can take care of it after prayer time is over.

(Acts 10:11 NKJV) and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

(Acts 10:12 NKJV) In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

(Acts 10:13 NKJV) And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

(Acts 10:14 NKJV) But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

(Acts 10:15 NKJV) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

(Acts 10:16 NKJV) This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Food considered Unclean / Liberty to Eat – Captives set Free

So all these creatures and considered Levitically unclean, and God is making the point to Peter that what you (using the Levitical Law) consider unclean, is as clean as you. Just as you now have liberty to eat food that was once considered unclean, so too am I saying that my liberty of setting the captives free is for all men, all woman, Jew or Gentile. Let the walls fall down.

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸ *"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,*

Because He has anointed Me

To preach the gospel to the poor;

He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,

To proclaim liberty to the captives

And recovery of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty those who are oppressed;

¹⁹ *To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."*

Peter – Not so Lord / God is Gracious and Patient & Persistent / Glad not 5min Prayer Life

Peter says not so to eating the unclean food. If Jesus is truly Lord, you can't say, "Not so" to Him. He can still be your Savior, but at the point of "Not so" He is not your Lord, for Lord means to be in authority over, and when we say "not so" we are usurping ourselves over His authority, and we are deciding what is our will over His will. But we see how gracious God is with Peter (the Great Apostle) who has seen the resurrection, but still could question God's directions. God is ever so gracious with us too, as we can so often question His leading and direction in our lives. God is patient, and persistent, and as long as we stay tuned to Him in prayer, we'll get whatever it is eventually. Thankfully for us Peter didn't have a 5 minute prayer life, and that he hung around long enough for God to speak three times.

(Acts 10:15 NKJV) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

(Acts 10:16 NKJV) This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

Animals Clean / God says Clean and Don't call Common / Washed in Blood / Cant Use

So all these creatures are considered Levitically unclean, and God is making the point to Peter that what you (using the Levitical Law) consider unclean, is as clean as you. What God has cleansed, don't call common. God has cleansed you. He's washed you in the blood of His only begotten Son. Don't call yourself common. Most of us have the tendency to say, "God couldn't use me. I'm no good. I don't pray like I should. I say things I regret. I struggle with things. I'm just common. I'm just dirt. I'm nothing." But God says to us, "Don't call common or unclean what I have cleansed. I've cleansed you. I chose you by name before the foundation of the world" (see Ephesians 1:4), and I have cleansed you with the blood of My precious Son.

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴*just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,* ⁵*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,*

Don't call that Brother Common Either

Let me add on to that, and that is God is saying to us today that we are not to call anyone "common" or "unclean" that He has cleansed. That brother or sister sitting next you, or at your workplace, or at the church across town has been made clean, and is anything but common, but

precious and pure, a desire and passion of God's heart. Don't call them common, and don't treat them as common, for I'll tell ya what – start treating them for the special person they are, and they'll start to believe it, and they will live above this world, and shine brightly for Christ, and you'll find yourself having a new and precious friend. Too many Christians today treat other Christians as common, and I just don't get it. I am always amazed when I see another brother that I know from another church and I say hey how is it going, how are the things of the Lord going, and they hardly even acknowledge me. I'll go to football games and see other Christians, and they seem more interested in talking to the unbeliever about the Ravens or politics, than me and the thing of God. Let's treat people as anything but common, and let's watch what God will do when we do.

Why did God send Peter – Gospel not call of Angels

In closing, why did the Lord send an angel to tell Cornelius to find Peter? Why didn't the angel himself share the gospel with Cornelius? Because it is not the job of angels to share the gospel. It's ours. God could thunder the gospel from heaven if He so desired. But He's chosen to use you and me as instruments to tell people His good news. Gang, if we ever get it through our heads that the gospel really is good news, we wouldn't need classes or motivational seminars on witnessing. Telling people that the Lord loves them—that every sin they've ever committed, are committing, or will commit is forgiven because of Jesus' death on the Cross—is not a burden. It's a privilege! Talking about religion is a pain. But sharing the gospel is pure joy. The Bible says that those who win souls are wise, and in Daniel 12:3 says those who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever. If you're a soul-winner, a Good News-sharer, you're going to shine—not only in heaven, but here on earth as well. How long has it been since you looked someone in the eye and said, "I've got Good News for you! Jesus loves you and died for your sin"? A week? A month? If you feel kind of dull and burned-out, share the gospel and shine once again!

*Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV)³⁰ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life,
And he who wins souls is wise.*

*Daniel 12:3 (NKJV)³ Those who are wise shall shine
Like the brightness of the firmament,
And those who turn many to righteousness
Like the stars forever and ever.*

Glad we don't have to take Death Lying Down

I am so glad we do not have to take death lying down, That we can tell people there is hope beyond the grave, that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.... and whoever lives and believes in Him shall never die, do you believe this? I am so glad that God has given us a voice in death and about death. As I watch the world perishing, as I watch marriages imploding, as I watch depression destroying, as I watch hopelessness happening, I say to myself in praise to God – thank you that I have a voice in the matter, that I don't have to sit here and remain silent and have nothing to say about it. But God has not only chosen man, but blessed man to have a voice in the matters. In an interview they were applauding Billy Graham for his great work in the ministry, and his response was, I wish I would have done more, I wish I would have done more. It has become a ministry cry of many a people; as for me my ministry cry has always been, "just give me one more". Lord please give me one more, one more soul snatched from hell, one more marriage healed, one more teenager seeing the lies of this world, one more child raised in a godly home, one more addiction broken, and one more depressed life liberated. I am so glad God has given me a voice, and has not left these things to angels, I am glad I get to be a part of bringing the walls down. A few years back while Renee and I were visiting friends, I was playing with their puppy. Well I turned my head, and he put his paw out to get my attention to play some more, and his claws ripped open the delicate skin on my nose. The blood started to flow, Renee started to panic, her girlfriend started to panic. Renee wanted to take me to the hospital, her girlfriend wanted me to hold a cloth over the cut, but I just held my head over the sink, and let the blood flow, I let the blood flow because I knew the blood would do what it was designed to do, and it that is to cleanse and heal. I let the blood flow and as it did it cleaned out the wound from the dogs dirty paw treading all over the world. And then, the blood did what it was designed to do, it started to clot, and heal. Oh precious saints, it is the blood, it is the Blood of Jesus that will bring

cleansing and healing to every situation of this life. It can cleanse us from our sins, and we get to proclaim that, we get to tell people that the blood covers sin and death. We get to tell people that the blood will heal their marriage, that the blood has the power over that addiction. It is the blood, the blood, the blood, and we get to have a voice in all those things, that we get to say in every situation, the blood of Christ is more than sufficient for all your needs, for all that you are going through, and Beloved we need only let the blood flow, let a person know God's blood has been shed for them, and the blood will do what the blood was designed to do. AMEN!

John 11:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵Jesus said to her, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. ²⁶And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

Not Ashamed of the Gospel (10:15)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

(Acts 10:15 NKJV) **And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."**

Gospel breaking forth to Gentiles – Every Tribe / What God has Cleansed

The gospel is breaking forth now to the Gentiles, a global breaking forth as this will be God's validation so none will doubt that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for every man and woman, every kindred, and tongue, people, and nation. God has said what He has cleansed let no man call common, and we see the context of this passage is that the blood of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse every man from sin and the power of death.

Revelation 5:9 (NKJV) ⁹*And they sang a new song, saying:*

*"You are worthy to take the scroll,
And to open its seals;
For You were slain,
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

I am so Thankful – not take Death lying Down

As I ended last weeks study, I am so glad and thankful that I do not have to take death laying down, that in death as death is all around me, I can speak out and say there is hope beyond the grave, and His Name is Jesus Christ. I am thankful that I have the Gospel that I don't have to keep silent as I watch a friend be crushed by their addiction, or as the tears of the depressed drop before my feet, or the resonating sound of a broken-heart shattering within my ears. For the Gospel (Good News) isn't just Eternal Life, but New Life, a Victorious Life. I praise God that I have a voice, a say in all those matter, and that I like the Apostle Paul may say too:

Romans 1:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

Paul not Ashamed – We'll see Why

Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel, and after our study is done we will clearly see why he wasn't ashamed of the gospel, and why we too can, will, and do proclaim the same, and the power to proclaim for any and every situation before us in life – we are not ashamed of the gospel, for it is THE POWER OF GOD!

Got to Love Paul

I love the Apostle Paul, he had to be one of the gutsiest guys in all of history. This bow-legged, poor-sighted, little Jewish rabbi named Paul was ready to preach the gospel in Rome (which was one tough place to preach the Gospel – so if you were you are at is a tough place to preach, you are not alone).

- Rome was the city wherein anti-Semitism had reared its ugly head, resulting in waves of brutal persecution.

- Rome was the home of Caesar Nero, the madman who was determined to exterminate Christianity.
- Nero, the one who dressed thousands of Christians in the skins of lambs and threw them to wolves and lions as he cried, “Where is your Good Shepherd now, little flock?”
- Nero was the one who dipped Christians in hot wax and lit them as candles in his garden while he shrieked, “How does it feel to be the light of the world now, Christians?”
- Rome was the entertainment capital of the world with a moral standard so low it would make Hollywood blush.
- Rome was the military mecca where generals and captains paraded pompously on the backs of black stallions.
- Rome was where the accepted greeting of the day was, “Caesar is lord.”

Romans 1:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵*So, as much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also.*

Tough Environment to be Christian in Rome / Paul not Ashamed – 5 reasons

For a Jewish Christian who claimed no other Lord than:

- One who commanded no army,
- One who made His triumphal entry on the back of a donkey,
- One who was pinned to a Cross by Roman soldiers,

To preach a message of repentance in Rome, would take guts indeed. Why could Paul not only declare that he wasn't ashamed of the gospel, but that He was ready to preach it in Rome"? I suggest five reasons....

1.) The Gospel Is Prophetic

Romans 1:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God ²which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures,

Gospel Not Something New / Genesis 3:15

The gospel is not something new and faddish, for it was promised from the very beginning. You see, way back in the Garden of Eden, the gospel was shared. In Genesis 3:15, called the Proto Evangelicum, or “the first sharing of the Good News,” the Lord said to the serpent, “There shall be war between you, Satan, and the Seed of woman. You shall bruise His heel, but He shall crush your head.” That’s the gospel. The singular Seed of woman, virgin-born, is Jesus Christ. On the Cross, He was bruised badly; but on the Cross, He crushed Satan completely.

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵ *And I will put enmity
Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel.”*

Gospel laid out in Gen 5

Truly, the gospel is not new. Look at Genesis 5....In the first genealogy ever given, the genealogy of Adam. It is no coincidence the each name has a meaning, and when you put the names together, it has a message for us. (Chuck Missler a true Bible scholar has done this scholarly work for us and I am much indebted to him for this work).

Adam	--Man (is)
Seth	--Appointed
Enosh	--Mortal
Cainan	--Sorrow (but)
Mahalalel	--The Blessed God
Jared	--Shall come down
Enoch	--Teaching
Methuselah	--His death shall bring
Lamech	--The Despairing (the poor being destroyed)
Noah	--Comfort, Rest

Not Something New – From beginning through Centuries / 300+ Prophecies

“We are not preaching something new,” said Paul. “From the very beginning of time, and down through the centuries, three hundred thirty-two specific prophecies were given concerning the One who would come as a Messiah for you and me.”

2.) The Gospel Is Provable

Romans 1:4 (NKJV) ⁴and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

Show us a Sign – Destroy this Temple

“Show us a sign,” they said. “One sign I’ll give to you,” Jesus answered. “Destroy this body and in three days I will rise again”:

John 2:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸So the Jews answered and said to Him, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” ¹⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*”

Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed / Well you Say – The Excuses!

Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh didn’t rise again when he died. Buddha couldn’t rise again. Neither could Confucius, Mohammed, or any of the gurus, philosophers, or religious teachers throughout history. Only Jesus rose again. And it’s provable. Go to Jerusalem. Check out the tomb.

- **The Wrong Tomb Challenge** - “Well,” you say, “I know you claim the tomb is empty, but how do we know the disciples went to the right tomb on that Easter Sunday morning? Maybe, with clouded minds and tear-filled eyes, unable to see or think straight, they went to the wrong tomb.” Do you really think so? Don’t you think those in authority would have checked it out and gone to the tomb themselves?
- **The Disciples Hid the Body Challenge** - “It must have been the disciples,” you argue. “They must have hidden Jesus’ body in order to continue His teachings.” Do you really believe that eleven disciples who were crucified upside down, had their brains beaten out with clubs, were speared in the back, were placed in boiling oil would not only experience persecution themselves, but would stand by while their wives and children were tortured—all for a lie? If you believe that, you have much more faith than I could ever have.
- **The Jews Hid the Body Challenge** - “Well, then,” you suggest, “it was the Jews. They took the body and hid it in order to harass the Christians.” Why would they do that? The Jews were trying to disprove Christianity. To do so, they would simply have had to produce Jesus’ body.
- **The Romans Hid the Body Challenge** - “It was the Romans,” you conclude. “They took the body to tease the Christians.” Really? History shows that Christianity was a major contributor to the fall of the Roman Empire. The body of Jesus would have put an end to Christianity forever. If the Romans had it, surely, they would have made it known.

Lawyer determined to disprove Resurrection / Who moved the Stone / 6yrs – Just 6hrs

Determined to disprove the Resurrection, a brilliant lawyer went to Jerusalem. He returned six years later, a radical born-again Christian, with the book entitled Who Moved The Stone? The book he wrote in defense of his newfound faith. It doesn’t take six years. Anyone who will spend even six hours checking out historical records and thinking through the Resurrection must, if he’s intellectually honest, conclude that there’s no logical alternative to the fact that something supernatural happened.

3.) The Gospel Is Personal

Romans 1:5 (KJV) ⁵By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Not by What – but by Whom / He is able to Keep / Jesus is doing the Work

Not “by what” but, “by Whom we have received grace and apostleship.” “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him,”

declared Paul, (see 2 Timothy 1:12). It was Jesus who did a work in Paul—just as it's Jesus who is doing a work in you.

2 Timothy 1:12 (NKJV) ¹²*For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

Not Distant – But here and Now / Not Cosmic Force / God who Says

He is not the distant far-away cosmic force, but the God who says:

(Jeremiah 29:11) *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

(Psalm 56:8) *You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?*

(Matthew 10:30) *"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.*

(Psalm 139:17-18) *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; When I awake, I am still with You.*

Job 12:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ *In whose hand is the life of every living thing,
And the breath of all mankind?*

Not Distant – but Intimate

Oh He is not the distant far-off God, but the here and now God, who is intimately concerned with every detail of my life, who loves me and can't stop thinking about me, even when I am unlovable or in rebellion. The God who says I can't get close enough to you, receive me so I may be so close to you that I'll be in you:

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

4.) The Gospel Is Powerful

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation... Romans 1:16 (a)

Doesn't talk about Power – It is POWER

The gospel doesn't **talk** about the power of God, gang. It **is** the power of God. The gospel pricks the conscience, grabs the mind, warms the heart, and sanctifies the life. The gospel makes perverted men pure, drunken men sober, crooked men straight. The gospel is powerful because it is not good advice. It's Good News, and it isn't just good news about Eternal Life after death, but New Life, a Victorious Life today.

What is Gospel – 1 Cor 15:3

What is the Good News? That Christ died for our sins, and that He was buried and rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus is alive, folks. And He will come into your life and do His work through you.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³*For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,*

Cross on MacDonald's Worker / Powerfully Simple – Simply Powerful

I like the story a guy told about on a recent road trip, he stopped at a McDonald's drive-thru for lunch. After placing his order, he came to the drive-up window to pay. he noticed an attractive, hand-carved cross hanging from the woman's neck, so he commented, "I like your cross." Her reply was a lesson to him in how simple it is to share one's testimony. She said: "Thank you. And I like the person who died on it for my sins. And I love the person who rose from the grave after having died on the cross." She easily could have left it at "Thank you." But her faithful witness touched him and drew him even closer to the Lord that day. The Gospel is powerfully simple, and simply powerful.

Ever wonder if might not Work for Them – God will to every Opportunity

As you witness or share your faith, does the thought ever cross your mind, What if it doesn't work for this person? What if his life isn't changed? Listen, precious believer, Jesus proved Himself to you. That's why you're here today. And He will prove Himself to every single person who gives

Him the opportunity—no matter his addiction, no matter his background. You are the proof of that!

Gospel Declares: Justified – Sanctified - Glorified

The gospel alone declares we were saved from the penalty of sin (justification), that we are saved from the power of sin (sanctification); and that we will be saved from the presence of sin (glorification). That's Good News because it's based not upon a program, but upon a Person—the Resurrected Jesus living in my heart, telling me how to live, and giving me the power to do what He tells me to do.

5.) The Gospel Is Preachable

...to every one that believeth... Romans 1:16 (b)

Preachable to 5 yr old – 55yr old – 105 yr old

To everyone who believes. The five-year-old can get it. The college professor can receive it. The man on his deathbed can embrace it. It is powerfully simple, and simply powerful.

Story of Man at JW Kingdom Hall

I'm reminded of the story of a man that stopped in at the Jehovah Witnesses Kingdom Hall. Although he sat in the back row and tried to be unobtrusive, he looked suspicious not only because of his long hair, but because he was neither wearing a suit and tie, nor carrying a briefcase and Watchtower magazine. After the service, an elder approached him and said, "You're new here, aren't you?" "Yes," he said. "What do you think?" they continued. "Well," he answered, "If I only have an hour to live, what must I do to make it into heaven?" At this point, they called over a few more elders, who began talking to him. But there was no hope given because, if he only had an hour to live, he couldn't become one of the 144,000; He couldn't be trained in Watchtower theology; he couldn't make it to heaven. So after they were done, he shared the gospel with them—and was asked to leave.

Thankful to tell of a Person – not a Program

I'm so thankful I'm a minister of the gospel. I'm so thankful I don't have to tell a person to follow this procedure or that program before he can be saved. No, I get to say, "The Work is done! Just believe."

Paul – I can see why Not Ashamed / Glad don't have to watch – have Power!

"Paul," you might say, "the more I understand the simplicity and potency of the gospel, the more I can see why you aren't ashamed. I am so glad that we don't have to just watch the world fade, but we have the power to do something about it."

Billy Graham – Great Message

Graeme Keith, treasurer of the Billy Graham Association and Billy's lifelong friend, says: I was on an elevator with Billy when another man in the elevator recognized him. He said, "You're Billy Graham, aren't you?" "Yes," Billy said. "Well," the man said, "you are truly a great man." Billy immediately responded, "No, I'm not a great man. I just have a great message."

So it is that we have – A Great Message, and I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is THE POWER OF GOD!

Outside of the Box (God's Ways)

Acts 10:17-48

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

A Most Pivotal Chapter / 2 Visions Intersecting / Apostolic Validation / Wish Tap Power

Chapter 10, a most pivotal passage in all the Bible as it is the official (if you will) unleashing of the Gospel and Spirit of the Lord out unto the Gentiles. The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8) could have been challenged as a one-time special touch by God, however in this chapter a vision/word is given to Peter and the Roman centurion, as the two vision will intersect to unveil God's great love for all men everywhere, both Jew and Gentile, and it will be validated by the Apostolic Authority of Peter. How much I would have liked to make a logical breakdown of this passage to show and expound how God works, that if we could tap into it and fully understand His ways and follow them, then we too would have an unleashing of the power of God in our lives like we could never imagine. If I am really sharp I'd find 7 points from this chapter for my outline (the number of completion) to make it even more powerful to the hearer.

Here would be some great and powerful points:

- 1.) Cornelius seeking the Lord – seek the Lord and be saved.
- 2.) Peter's great prayer life – oh the power of prayer.
- 3.) Peter's great obedience to the Lord – obey and be empowered mightily.
- 4.) Peter's great understanding of the Word – know the Word and everything will always be clear.
- 5.) Peter's gift of evangelism – do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:2).
- 6.) The Great Altar Call – today is the day of Salvation, so preach for a decision.

Honestly – Failed Miserably / Only 6 pts

Well, to be honest, I totally fell flat on that endeavor, and I could not find any logical flow, all that I see throughout this account is the supernatural work of God because none of those points I just mentioned are truly happening in this account. In fact, I couldn't find 7 points but only 6 (the number of man – go figure)

Thus I considered the following titles for this message:

1. I have absolutely no idea how God works
2. I am totally clueless
3. Here is what Pastor Chuck said.

Could I teach on the example of:

- 1.) Cornelius seeking Jesus – hardly as he had no idea who Jesus truly was, thus Peter had to be sent to him.
- 2.) Peter's great prayer life – hardly as he is putting his food order in during prayer.
- 3.) Peter's great obedience to the Lord – hardly as he says "Not so Lord".
- 4.) Peter's great understanding of the Word – hardly as he still didn't get it after 3 times.
- 5.) Peter's gift of evangelism – hardly as he had to ask why they called for him.
- 6.) The Great Altar Call – hardly as I even struggled as I see them start speaking in tongues when there is no record of them professing Christ.

I see no Order – No Apply and Power / Outside the Box / Scriptural Challenges

I see no order, I see nothing logical, I see little that I can say to you, and apply to me, hey if you do these things in your life, just watch and see what God will do. What outline structure could I give to you to use to apply these principles to your life, none really. So what did I title this message? "Outside of the Box (God's Ways)". For as we look at this passage we see God is just working outside-of-the-box. He is working in a way that really just goes outside how we think it should be, He is working in ways that we see really causes some Scriptural challenges as we could debate lots of things here and say this really doesn't fit in the theological box we as Fundamentalist believe.

Good for us Fundamentalist – We can Miss God Moving / He has no Bounds

It is good for us Fundamentalist to have passages of scripture such as this, because we can become so wrapped up into perfecting our theology, that we totally miss out on the move of the Spirit, that the Spirit of God has no bounds, and will move beyond our understanding. What this passage will do for us today, is bring us to freedom, a freedom from having to have everything figured out, and the freedom to see that even when we aren't right-on, God will still move-on and do a great work in us, through us, and around us.

Case in Point?

1.) Cornelius seeking Jesus – hardly as he had no idea who Jesus truly was, thus Peter had to be sent to him.

Recap – Angel appears to Cornelius while praying.

(Acts 10:1 NKJV) There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, (Other translations for Regiment say Cohort or Band)

(Acts 10:2 NKJV) a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always.

(Acts 10:3 NKJV) About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius!"

(Acts 10:4 NKJV) And when he observed him, he was afraid, and said, "What is it, lord?" So he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God.

(Acts 10:5 NKJV) "Now send men to Joppa, and send for Simon whose surname is Peter.

(Acts 10:6 NKJV) "He is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea. He will tell you what you must do."

(Acts 10:7 NKJV) And when the angel who spoke to him had departed, Cornelius called two of his household servants and a devout soldier from among those who waited on him continually.

(Acts 10:8 NKJV) So when he had explained all these things to them, he sent them to Joppa.

Trouble for both Calvinist & Arminius / Hard to Say Cornelius not Seeking / Way Off

Well here is your Calvinist verse Arminius argument here. The Calvinist person who says salvation is totally 100% the work of God has to admit there is a problem here, because the angel says to Cornelius, "*your prayers and you alms have come up for a memorial before God*". It is hard to say that Cornelius wasn't seeking God, and it is hard to say that God had 100% initiated Cornelius' desire. But the Arminius (who believe that the fall of man was not total, maintaining that there was enough good left in man for him to will to accept Jesus Christ unto salvation) has a problem here in that Cornelius has no idea who Jesus was (thus why Peter has to come to him), he was praying to God (doing religious things as praying and giving) but without knowing who Jesus was he might as well been a million miles off.

Hard to Reconcile Romans 3 & Jer 29 / God will Marry the Gospel and Person / Open Box

How do you reconcile Romans 3 and Jeremiah 29? You just can't and there-in lies the freedom for us in that we see God is outside both of those boxes, while at the same time working within both of them. Although we can't reconcile the difference between the two, we can confidently rest in the fact that God is going to marry up the gospel with anyone that is open to the gospel. And, He uses man to deliver (not angels), and man needs to open the door to hear the message. So I need not get wrapped up in all the theology, I just need to unwrap the box and let the gospel out, and know that God will marry up the gospel with anyone that is open to the gospel. Be ready for God to work outside of the box.

Romans 3:10-12 (NKJV) ¹⁰As it is written:

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ *There is none who understands;*

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² *They have all turned aside;*

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NKJV) ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

2.) Peter's great prayer life – hardly as he is putting his food order in during prayer.

Recap – Peter is praying then gets hungry.

(Acts 10:9 NKJV) The next day, as they went on their journey and drew near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

(Acts 10:10 NKJV) Then he became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they made ready, he fell into a trance

Cheeseburger & Fries Please / Prayer still Vital / Freedom – Will Speak / My Tendencies

In the middle of Peter's prayer he is calling in an order for burgers and fries (supersize it please) – that isn't the most powerful of prayers. Now does this discount all that we studied last week about the diligence and discipline of prayer – absolutely not, all those points are biblical and proven powerful. The freedom this speaks to us today? The freedom is that even when our prayer life isn't the greatest, God will still break through and speak to us. I have a tendencies (in my fundamental structure) to feel that if I'm not in deep and rich prayer I will not get a revelation from God – and that simply isn't true, God will speak to us whether we have just spent eight hours in prayer, or haven't prayed in 8 months – His revelations to us aren't bound by our perfect prayer life, but His desire to talk to us about something very specific.

Think I blew off Prayer – God not Speak / Freedom – God outside the SOLID Prayer

I can think that since I blew-off my time of prayer, or it wasn't well-structured, that God isn't going to speak to me or I'm not going to hear from Him until I get back into a solid time of prayer, but we see that that is just not so. Be free Beloved that even when you slept in, or got distracted, that God will go outside the box and will still speak to you in your day, and on your way. Just say, Lord that wasn't the greatest time of prayer, well honestly it was no time of prayer, but I want to fellowship with you, let's dialogue – and I'll start by saying, "I love you".

3.) Peter's great obedience to the Lord – hardly as he says "Not so Lord."

Recap – God gives Peter command to eat unclean food, and Peter says no to God.

(Acts 10:11 NKJV) and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth.

(Acts 10:12 NKJV) In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

(Acts 10:13 NKJV) And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

(Acts 10:14 NKJV) But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean."

(Acts 10:15 NKJV) And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

Freedom again – The Reward System / Obedient – God Uses / Be Ready – Even Bad Day
Freedom again, for my Fundamental belief easy has the reward system, I'm obedient, and God uses me. When I am not in perfect obedience, God won't use me. God goes outside the box again and how many times I find myself disobedient to God (say I didn't love my wife the way Christ loved the Church that morning, lets say I was just down-right in the flesh), and then amazingly I go to work, or stop at the store, and someone comes up to me and the next thing I know they are asking things about God – and I just go oh Lord you are totally amazing that you use a jerk like me. Even in our worst days, be ready for God to work outside the box.

4.) Peter's great understanding of the Word – hardly as he still didn't get it after 3 times.

Peter Summoned to Caesarea

(Acts 10:16 NKJV) This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again.

(Acts 10:17 NKJV) Now while Peter wondered within himself what this vision which he had seen meant, behold, the men who had been sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate.

3 Times doesn't Get It / Isaiah 42 – Matt 15 / Not just that Situation – All Generation

Peter after 3 times is still wondering what this meant. He didn't put Isaiah 42 together of God proclaiming the gospel was for the Gentiles. He didn't tie all the events of Matthew 15 together which start with Jesus saying it's not what a man eats that defiles him but what is in his heart, and then right after that whole speech a Gentile woman comes and asks him to heal his daughter, and Jesus says to her I came first for Israel, but after her pleading we see Jesus healing her. Jesus was not trying to be difficult with her. Rather, He was drawing out an understanding from her that would be helpful not only in her situation specifically, but to us and to all generations historically – and was that the gospel was for both Jew and Gentile. Peter was right there, but he still wasn't getting.

Isaiah 42:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶ "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
⁷ To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Matthew 15:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, "**Hear and understand:**
¹¹**Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.**"

Matthew 15:24-28 (NKJV) ²⁴But He answered and said, "**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**"
²⁵Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!"

²⁶But He answered and said, "**It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.**"

²⁷And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."

²⁸Then Jesus answered and said to her, "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

Freeing – God still works if not Bible Scholar

This is freeing again, especially for a fundamentalist such as myself and that is that God will still work, go outside the boxes that I put Him in, and will work in my life even if I am not a Bible scholar. This is Peter who had walked with Jesus for three years, has now been an Apostle for about 8-10 years, and he still had some learning to go, but God used him as he was learning along the way. So too will God do the same for us, so we need not wait until we finish Bible

College, or have read through the Bible 12 times, God will use us along the way, as we are learning along the way.

Side Note

Side Note: please notice that God is working on both ends. He is working on Peter the same time He is working on Cornelius. So notice that when God is at work, He will be working on both ends. So when that person comes and tells you that God said you are to do something, and you are like I'm not sure about that, no worries just tell them you'll wait for God to work on your end before you take the next step.

5.) Peter's gift of evangelism – hardly as he had to ask why they called for him.

(Acts 10:18 NKJV) And they called and asked whether Simon, whose surname was Peter, was lodging there.

(Acts 10:19 NKJV) While Peter thought about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are seeking you.

(Acts 10:20 NKJV) "Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them."

(Acts 10:21 NKJV) Then Peter went down to the men who had been sent to him from Cornelius, and said, "Yes, I am he whom you seek. **For what reason have you come?"**

(Acts 10:22 NKJV) And they said, "Cornelius the centurion, a just man, one who fears God and has a good reputation among all the nation of the Jews, was divinely instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, and to hear words from you."

(Acts 10:23 NKJV) Then he invited them in and lodged them. On the next day Peter went away with them, and some brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

Evangelism – doesn't cross Mind / Peter 3,000 & 5,000 – Still asks "What's Up"

Well we can't say that this is Peter's gift of evangelism for it isn't even crossing his mind to preach the Gospel. The gospel isn't on the fore-front of his mind, he isn't thinking wow I have a captive audience here, what a perfect opportunity to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Instead, the great preacher who saw 3,000 converts on the Day of Pentecost, and then another 5,000 at the Temple after the healing of the lame man says "so what's up, why are you seeking me?"

Freedom - Spirit moves apart from our Preconceived Thoughts / Ever been There?

The freedom, even in situations where we don't even consider that the gospel can go forth, God could be working outside of the box, and the Spirit is ready to fall on that person in that situation. Ever been there, just talking to someone, and for whatever reason you think they would be the last person in the world to seek God, desire Him, be willing to repent, and the thought of presenting Christ to them literally doesn't even cross our mind. Peter is thinking, hey these are Gentiles, why in the world are they seeking me, and we too can be talking to someone who we consider would never consider Christ, and we can actually not even realize that they are engaging us in a spiritual conversation. We could be talking sports, and they are dropping hints to get us to talk spiritual things with us. They could say, yea I was watching this show last night about Islam, pretty crazy. Or yep, crazy times we live in, does anyone have the answers. They actually want to talk about God, but feel funny just coming right out and saying, I want to know more about Jesus for I feel something is missing in my life. This is freeing because, God can be working, when we are totally clueless, Peter "the Great Apostle" is the perfect example – so why are you guys calling for me. Application for you and me, remember Peter, remember this story, and always be open that God is opening doors, outside the box.

Side Note

Side Note - prejudices are beginning to break down. It was an unthinkable thing to invite a Gentile in to your home. Every place that he would sit down would be considered unclean. If you would sit down where he had sat in a chair, then you would be unclean. They felt that this

ceremonial uncleanness could be transmitted by touching or by touching something that a Gentile had touched. So to invite them in to spend the night was the beginning of the breakdown of the prejudice.

Peter Meets Cornelius

(Acts 10:24 NKJV) And the following day they entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends.

(Acts 10:25 NKJV) As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

(Acts 10:26 NKJV) But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man."

(Acts 10:27 NKJV) And as he talked with him, he went in and found many who had come together.

Peter won't take God's Glory

Peter knew to not take God's glory, so too must we for it is the shortest distance to the exit sign in the ministry.

Interestingly Phillip lives in Caesarea / Apostolic Authority

Interestingly that Phillip lives in Caesarea, but God called Peter to go, not Phillip. We see God sends an Apostle, because this gospel going to the Gentiles had to be recognized in Jerusalem, the heart and head of the Church, and God was making sure that everyone would know that God has opened the Gospel to the whole world.

(Acts 10:28 NKJV) Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

Peter getting the Picture – Still not getting it all (verse 29)

Although Peter didn't understand the vision immediately, as events began to unfold, walking from Joppa to Caesarea, he is beginning to get the picture. But verse 29, it is taking some time.

(Acts 10:29 NKJV) "Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for. **I ask, then, for what reason have you sent for me?"**

Definitely not Peter's Gift of Evangelism

Definitely not Peter's great evangelistic gift, and if you are one of those people who say I don't have the gift of evangelism, it isn't my calling, well this story totally destroys your excuse for not sharing your faith because God isn't bound by the "professionals", He just is looking for someone who is willing to open their mouth, and He will do the rest.

Recounting the Story – For Generations to Come – The Gospel has Come

Now (verses 30-33) Cornelius will recount the story again for Peter, but it is not just for Peter and Cornelius but for all who will hear about this story, for this is the unleashing of the Good News to the Gentiles, and God is making sure the story gets retold enough times (here it is the 2nd time in 30 verses – and we will get the whole story again in chapter 11) so all will know, understand and have no doubt that this is from Him – the gospel for the Gentiles! And that the two (Jew and Gentile) shall be one:

Ephesians 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: ⁶that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

(Acts 10:30 NKJV) So Cornelius said, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing,

(Acts 10:31 NKJV) "and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard, and your alms are remembered in the sight of God.

(Acts 10:32 NKJV) 'Send therefore to Joppa and call Simon here, whose surname is Peter. He is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the sea. When he comes, he will speak to you.'

(Acts 10:33 NKJV) "So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God."

Peter Preaches to Cornelius' Household

(Acts 10:34 NKJV) Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality.

(Acts 10:35 NKJV) "But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

God no Respector of Person

God is not a respector of persons (or Nations for that matter). He doesn't care if you are intellectually brilliant or if you flunked kindergarten four times, if you spend eight hours in prayer or if you haven't prayed in eight months. God is not a respector of people. He's a lover of people.

What are works of Righteousness – 2 Cor 5:21

What are the works of righteousness of man, the works of Jesus Christ! Peter will now go on to explain the works of righteousness (the works of Jesus Christ in verse 36-43). Again, total freedom, the work isn't upon us to do, but Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Let's read the next verses slowly, and let the Word speak for the Word

(Acts 10:36 NKJV) "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

(Acts 10:37 NKJV) "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

Cornelius didn't know Jesus was for him

So Peter didn't know that Jesus was for the Gentiles, and nor did Cornelius know that Jesus was for him either. Soon both will know. You know it is the same today, that many people don't know that Jesus is for them, they know about Jesus, but think that He is for someone else, and not them personally. They have been told a lie by Satan or their Oh that the world would know, and that God would use me to make the world know, that He is Lord of all, He is Lord for all.

(Acts 10:36 NKJV) "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

(Acts 10:38 NKJV) "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(Acts 10:39 NKJV) "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

(Acts 10:40 NKJV) "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

(Acts 10:41 NKJV) "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

(Acts 10:42 NKJV) "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

(Acts 10:43 NKJV) "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Verse 43 – Biblical Definition / What must we do to do Works of God – Believe

Verse 43 is the biblical definition of "works of righteousness" – to believe in Him. When they asked Jesus what must we do, to do the works of God, Jesus said:

John 6:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

Here is something Powerful – the 3 minute Gospel / No Special Gentile Version

Now here is something powerful that is very clear to me, and that is that Peter gives the gospel in 3 minute. He keeps it simple, doesn't get wordy, just keeps it simple. Peter is opening the gospel up to the whole Gentile world, and he can still give the gospel in 3 minutes. We need not think we have to give a 60 minute gospel, keep it simple like Peter did. Notice also Peter doesn't make it a Gentile version, he just gives the universal gospel that covers all the main points of salvation.

Personal:

Peter proclaims the Good News that man can have "peace" with God, and that this peace is offered to all men because He is God to all men.

(Acts 10:36 NKJV) "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

Problem :

But even with such great news, there is a problem and that is that our sin separates us from the Holy God (that was the message the John the Baptist preached).

(Acts 10:37 NKJV) "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

Penalty:

Because of the problem there is a penalty, and every man will stand before God in judgment.

(Acts 10:42 NKJV) "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

Provision:

Peter presents Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the power of the resurrection.

(Acts 10:38 NKJV) "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(Acts 10:39 NKJV) "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

(Acts 10:40 NKJV) "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

(Acts 10:41 NKJV) "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

Profession:

Peter presents man role in salvation, BELIEVING.

(Acts 10:43 NKJV) "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

We will never Outdebate the JW or Atheist / Get to the Conscience / Freeing not Expert

I learned many years ago that I will not be able to out-debate an atheist, a Jehovah Witness, a Mormon, a Muslim, nor a "religious person". Nor do I want to, for we need to go around the intellect, and get right to the conscience. When I witness, I'll entertain them with their questions for awhile, it is part of building a relationship with them, it is part of letting them speak and letting them know that I care enough to not only speak but listen, but at some point I just ask them, can I just share with you the gospel from start to finish, I'll do it in 3 minutes. You see my goal is to get the gospel to their conscience as Romans 2:15, to the place where there is the conviction of sin before the Holy God. Peter isn't preaching a Gentile understandable gospel (referencing Isaiah and God has a call for the Gentiles, or trying to make them understand circumcision and other Jewish ways, nor counter-attacking all the Roman gods), Peter just preaches Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This is extremely freeing that we don't have to be experts in all the religions of the world in order that we can show them their wrong, all we have to do is preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and let the gospel work on their conscience.

Romans 2:14-16 (NKJV) ¹⁴*for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their*

conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NKJV) ¹And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. ²For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. ⁴And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

6.) The Great Altar Call – hardly as I even struggled as I see them start speaking in tongues when there is no record of them professing Christ.

The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

(Acts 10:44 NKJV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

(Acts 10:45 NKJV) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

(Acts 10:46 NKJV) For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

(Acts 10:47 NKJV) "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

(Acts 10:48 NKJV) And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days.

Destroys Modern Evangelism Model / I got saved in my Bedroom

Well this destroys the model of modern evangelism, the need for the Altar call. Amazingly we see people being baptized with the Holy Spirit without any professing. Why is that, because salvation comes when one believes, not speaks. I was saved 3 months before I knew there was such a thing as the "sinners prayer". I was at a church and the pastor gave an altar call and I watched all these people go walking up to the altar and I was like that's interesting, I wonder if I need to go up there to be saved. I got saved in my bedroom just reading the Bible, and came to the cross and realized that Jesus died for me personally, and the gospel became personal to me, and I believed it in my heart, and at that moment I was saved and sealed.

Freedom – just free to present – Let God take care of the Conviction

What is the freedom here for us today, we need not chase the prayer down, we just need to get the gospel out and the gospel will do what the gospel was designed to do. Present the gospel, verbally, or with a tract, a CD, whatever way you can and then rest that God's Spirit will move for all who are open to receive it.

Wonderful Passage for us Fundamentalist / Bulletproof Theology / Sit back & Enjoy

Chapter 10 is a wonderful passage for us Fundamentalist who think everything has to be in perfect theological order, be absolutely bulletproof to withstand any Scriptural challenge, whereas we are just free to enjoy that sometimes God just moves in ways that are beyond our understanding, and we can just sit back and enjoy watching Him work "Outside of the Box".

NOTE: To those who have yet to Receive Jesus Christ as your Savior

(Acts 10:43 NKJV) "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Religion is not enough, you need to be saved! Now it is important to note that God is going to send Peter to Cornelius because although Cornelius was devout (which means "religious"), although he feared God, gave alms (taking care of the poor), and he prayed to God, even though Cornelius did all those things, he still wasn't saved, and thus God had to send Peter to him to bring him to salvation. There are so many "Cornelius" around us today, so many people who because they are "religious", fear God in that they won't use His name in vain, know He is God,

they help feed the poor, and they pray, they still aren't saved because they have never been introduced personally to the Savior. It wasn't enough that he was religious, that he prayed daily, for there are many a religions today that are devout, they pray daily (even 3 times a day), they take care of the poor, they maintain a religious routine faithfully, but they are not saved because their sin hasn't been dealt with, and they haven't received the Savior.

Precious person, you need to do the "works of righteousness" and that is to believe in Jesus Christ. You need to recognize that you are a sinner and that your sin separates you from the Holy God (Romans 3:23), and that the wages (punishment) of sin is death (Romans 6:23), and you must believe that Jesus Christ traded places with you by taking your place on the cross and thus showing you how much God loves you (Romans 5:8 & John 3:16), and you must ask Jesus into your heart, and agree to turn (repent) of your sins (Romans 10:9).

Chapter 11

Let there be no Doubt (11:1-18)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Chp 10 – Gospel to the Gentiles / Now Retelling – the Challenge

In chapter 10 we read the account of the Gospel coming to the Gentiles, it is 8-10 years since the Cross of Christ, and now the Gospel is being opened to the world. The first half of chapter 11 is a retelling of the account as Peter will be challenged by some of the Jewish Christians if God really poured His blood out for the Gentile (Non-Jewish) world also. God has this story retold, so "there would be no doubt". Let's pick our study up in verse 1 of chapter 11:

Peter Defends God's Grace

(Acts 11:1 NKJV) **Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.**

(Acts 11:2 NKJV) **And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him,**

(Acts 11:3 NKJV) **saying, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!"**

Jews in Biblical Times – World Divided in 2 / Gentiles – Avoided at all Cost / Peter Ate

Again to the Jews living in biblical times, world population was divided into two groups: Jews and Gentiles. In God's economy, the Jews were to be a testimony to the Gentiles of how to live and in whom to believe (Isaiah 42:6). But something happened over the years. Instead of seeing themselves as a light unto the Gentiles, the Jews saw Gentiles as despicable, grotesque, and to be avoided at all costs. With this in mind, imagine what a shock it must have been to Jewish Christians when they heard that Peter had the audacity to go into the house of Cornelius—a Gentile—and actually share a meal with him and then lead him to Christ, and his whole family..

Isaiah 42:6-7 (NKJV)⁶ *"I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,*

And will hold Your hand;

I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,

As a light to the Gentiles,

⁷ *To open blind eyes,*

To bring out prisoners from the prison,

Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Spirit Filled Believers – Challenge Apostle / So Doctrinal – miss Living Word / Prejudice

It is important to see that these are Jewish Christians, believers (who had been baptized with the Holy Spirit – verse 17), and they believe they are so right that they are willing to challenge Apostolic Authority. Boy, doctrine and theology are so important, yet how many people get so locked into the black and white of the pages that they can't see the living and breathing Word of God (Heb 4:11-12) moving and working. And, as many a people can't see through their traditions (as they were taught somewhere along the way of life) or just their personal bias or prejudice (that is often taught or caught by their parents) that they can't see through the black and white to see that God is moving "outside their box" they put Him in.

Acts 11:17 (NKJV)¹⁷ *"If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"*

Hebrews 4:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Don McClure – Wilbur Smith / Greatest Danger American Church

Pastor Don McClure talking to Dr. Wilbur Smith (a man anointed like few we have seen in this century) asked, what do you think is the greatest danger to the American Church is today, and he said, “dead orthodoxy” people that are so right that they are dead-right.

Good Example - May we See – Lord still works Supernatural / Men willing to Hear & See

May we see that the Lord is the Lord, and that He still works supernaturally through the Church. These men here are good examples for us today, as we see that even through a lifetime of traditions and learnt prejudices, they are willing to hear Peter out, and the resultant is that they are willing to adjust their doctrine and theology based on a new Word of God that they had never heard or considered.

What read here – Not that Old / Jesus Movement in 70's / Kay Smith / Not so Lord / Hair

You know what we are reading isn't that old either, for we continually see it still today. When the Jesus movement was happening back in the late 60's if you ever hear Pastor Chuck talk about it, he just felt all those hippie's just needed to get a hair cut and a job. He will tell you that it wasn't his great burden for them, but his wife Kay who would spend hours praying for them. She would watch them going in the woods behind the house to smoke pot and she would just pray for them. Chuck eventually understood what the Lord desired to do among the kids, and came alongside the Lord and the rest is history. Thousands of young people, long-haired young people started to get saved. Of course churches all around the country (even within Chuck's church) started to say “not so Lord”, they can't be saved, in fact look at their hair how long it is, Corinthians says men shouldn't have long hair. Pastor Chuck has said that he struggled with the long-hair thing too, he said when he would first see the long-hair of the men he would say oh what a tragedy, but then as he watched his hair start to fall out he would say oh what a tragedy, and realize that one was not worse than the other. Long-hair, short-hair, no hair, what does it really matter.

Today's Teens – Skipped Generation / Our Opportunity / Need more Kay's / Get 3 Names

Hey parents, our teens today are no different than those teens in the 70's. I believe our teens are ripe for a harvest, the majority of them are a skipped-generation, meaning that their parents quit going to church as soon as they left home, and church and religion are not instilled in them, they are fertile unplowed soil. We have the opportunity to sow the seeds of God in their life, the things we share with them are almost totally new concepts and when they hear them many are fascinated by them – Wow God is real, Wow He thinks of me. Parents, can I encourage you in this, we need some Kay Smith's in 2008; would you ask God to break your heart of the things that break His, and that is these teenagers being misled and fed the lie. Would you pray for your kid's friends specifically, that you would be given the opportunity to share the things of God with them? That God would lay them on your heart to pray for them. If you are here and you don't have any kids, then I ask you to go ask anyone in this place that does have kids to give you a list of 3 names of their kids' friends that you will commit to pray for over the next 30 days, and let's see what God will do. See BJ and Kelly if you want to do more than pray.

Ed Freeman

I heard a wonderful story this week, it is told by a Vietnam soldier who was critically wounded, and it seemed like he would be left to die on the battlefield:

You're an 18 or 19 year old kid. You're critically wounded, and dying in the jungle in the Ia Drang Valley, 11-14-1965. LZ Xray, Vietnam. Your Infantry Unit is outnumbered 8 - 1, and the enemy fire is so intense, from 100 or 200 yards away, that your own Infantry Commander has ordered the MediVac helicopters to stop coming in.

You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns, and you know you're not getting out. Your family is 1/2 way around the world, 12,000 miles away, and you'll never see them again. As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day.

Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear that sound of a helicopter, and you look up to see a Huey, but it doesn't seem real, because no Medi-Vac markings are on it.

Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not Medi-Vac, so it's not his job, but he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire, after the Medi-Vacs were ordered not to come.

He's coming anyway. And he drops it in, and sits there in the machine gun fire, as they load 2 or 3 of you on board. Then he flies you up and out through the gunfire, to the Doctors and Nurses.

And, he kept coming back..... 13 more times..... and took about 30 of you and your buddies out, who would never have gotten out.

Medal of Honor Recipient Ed Freeman died last Wednesday at the age of 80, in Boise, IdahoMay God Give Rest To His Soul.....

Need more Kay's and Ed's / Willing to go in – Pull as Many Out

We need more Kay Smith's, and we need more Ed Freeman today. Yes we could justify sitting at a safe distance of the battlefield because we don't have to go, say we aren't called to go, say that things are too busy or intense with everything else that is going on in my life right now, or

..... We could choose to drop right into the middle of battle and try to pull-out as many as we possible can before it is too late. We need more Kay's, we need more Ed's, get 3 names, pray for 3, then let's see what God might do.

(Acts 11:4 NKJV) But Peter explained it to them in order from the beginning, saying:

(Acts 11:5 NKJV) "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object descending like a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came to me.

Leaves out the Food Order / 4am Prayer

Peter leaves out the part that he was thinking about lunch, waiting for his food to come. Peter gives the spiritual version of his prayer, which is kind of like that person who says, "well this morning at 4am while I was praying for the people of Vanuatu, the Lord showed me a most wonderful vision".

(Acts 11:6 NKJV) "When I observed it intently and considered, I saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air.

(Acts 11:7 NKJV) "And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.'

(Acts 11:8 NKJV) "But I said, 'Not so, Lord! For nothing common or unclean has at any time entered my mouth.'

(Acts 11:9 NKJV) "But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'

(Acts 11:10 NKJV) "Now this was done three times, and all were drawn up again into heaven.

(Acts 11:11 NKJV) "At that very moment, three men stood before the house where I was, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

(Acts 11:12 NKJV) "Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.

Peter smart – Takes Witnesses

Peter was smart. Called to the house of a Gentile, he took six men with him to witness what would transpire. Deuteronomy says by the witnesses of two or three a matter shall be established.

Deuteronomy 19:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵*"One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.*

Peter Repeats Account / 35ft Scrolls / God makes Sure / & You be Sure – Not Common

In response to the accusations of his Jewish Christian brothers, Peter repeated the vision he was given in chapter 10. This intrigues me. Luke was not writing in a book, but on a scroll. The largest scrolls were thirty-five feet in length. Longer than that, they would have been too big to handle.

Thus, with only a limited amount of space, literature in biblical times had to be very concise. Why, then, would the Holy Spirit inspire Luke to take valuable space to repeat the story of chapter 10 almost verbatim in chapter 11? I suggest it's because it's real important—as though the Holy Spirit is saying, Salvation has come to all, *"let there be no doubt"*, and..... "Don't miss this,

I want you to grab hold of, and never forget - - - - - that what the Father calls clean, is clean, and you are not common.”

You are made in Image of God – that is Anything but Common / When Last Time

Every man, woman, and child has been made in the image of God. That is anything but common; Beloved when was the last time you mediated on the fact that you are made in the image of God. That He can't stop thinking about you! That you take His breath away, as a groom looks upon his bride coming down the isle all dressed in white.

Genesis 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Psalms 139:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷ How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!

How great is the sum of them!

¹⁸ *If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand;
When I awake, I am still with You.*

Isaiah 61

Isaiah wrote:

Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,

My soul shall be joyful in my God;

For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments,

And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

What Fabulous Day – I'm Clean / Satan Whispers – Fowl Mentality / What God Cleansed

What a fabulous day it is when we say, "I'm righteous because I'm in Christ Jesus and because of what He has done for me on the Cross of Calvary. I'm His bride. I am aware of my uncleanness, my "four-footed beastliness," and my "fowl" mentality—but God has cleansed me eternally." Why is it that we beat ourselves when, in so doing, we only cast aspersions on the work Jesus did on Calvary? Salvation is so wonderful! What the Lord has done for us is incredible! But it's so hard for us to receive grace graciously because there's something in us that says, "I don't deserve that kind of unconditional, unmerited love. I've got to earn it. I've got to prove myself worthy of it."

Whenever you talk to the Lord freely and cast your care upon Him joyfully, expect Satan to whisper in your ear, "You're a creep, a four-footed beast, foul and unclean. You don't deserve to even enter God's presence, much less stay there!" May your answer always be, "What He has cleansed, don't call uncommon. And He has cleansed me." I am free to live, I am free to dance, I am free to live for Him, for I am free (as the Newsbly songs goes).

(Acts 11:13 NKJV) "And he told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, 'Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter,

(Acts 11:14 NKJV) 'who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved.'

(Acts 11:15 NKJV) "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning.

(Acts 11:16 NKJV) "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

(Acts 11:17 NKJV) "If therefore God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?"

(Acts 11:18 NKJV) When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Don't Blame Me – Waiting for Lunch / Oh Happy Day – Moment History / 3 Times = Sure

"Don't blame me," Peter said. "I didn't make this happen. I was just waiting for lunch when I saw a vision wherein the Spirit told me three men would come and escort me. When they showed up at my gate, I went with them and heard about the angelic preparation in Cornelius' heart and life. Then I started teaching the Word, and the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they began to speak in tongues. This wasn't my idea, it was God's! Oh what a day and what a moment in history this

was, and here we enjoy and praise the Lord for opening this gospel (Good News) up to us. God repeats it 3 times for us so there is absolutely no confusion, “let there be no doubt” that **God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.**

Chp 10 – Gift was Holy Spirit (same as Pentecost) / Validation – No Difference

In the chapter 10 account Peter identifies clearly what gift of the Holy Spirit was given, and that was the gift of speaking in tongues. Peter reminds them that it was the same gift they received on the Day of Pentecost. Why the same gift, why the gift of tongues? It is God’s validation that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile, but that He considers them only as “His Body”. The same gift was proof that it was the same Spirit that it could only have been from God, so “there was no doubt” that salvation has come to the Gentiles. When the other Jews heard it was tongues, the debate was over, it was clear this was of God.

(Acts 10:44 NKJV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

(Acts 10:45 NKJV) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

(Acts 10:46 NKJV) For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

Chp 11 – Tongues & Prophecy / Important to Understand Difference

Chapter 11 is unique for in it there is an account of both tongues and prophecy (as we will see with the prophet Agabus in verse 27), and I think it profitable to take a moment here and address and identify the difference between tongues and prophecy, for it is vitally important that we understand the difference, for by doing so, often times will be able to determine if a person is truly speaking spiritually or if it actually just the flesh.

(Acts 11:27 NKJV) And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

(Acts 11:28 NKJV) Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

The Distinction

Here is the simple distinction between the two:

- Prophecy is the Lord speaking through a person to the Church.
- Tongues (with interpretation in a gathering of believers) is the Body praying to the Lord.

Paul says in 1 Cor 14:2-3, that he that speaks in an unknown tongues speaks not to a person, but to God.

1 Corinthians 14:1-5 (NKJV) ¹Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy. ²For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. ³But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.

Real Simple – But Today totally Confused

It is that simple, and it is that clear, yet today it has been totally confused and abused.

Again – Look at our Story here in Acts

Here in chapter 10 and 11 we have a real clear example. In 10:46, tongues magnified, glorified God. In 11:27, prophecy was a Word from God to the people.

(Acts 10:46 NKJV) For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered,

(Acts 11:28 NKJV) Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

An Example / Tongues - Lord You are Beautiful / Groaning / Prophecy – The Lord Says

An example in English, if I was to speak in tongues right now, it would sound something like this, “Lord you are Holy, you are beautiful, you have created all things and by your power they exist!” You see I am magnifying God, I am glorifying Him. Tongues is my heart just spilling out in praise for God, so much so that a person can’t even put it into human words, but into the heavenly language. Paul would say the Spirit within us groans (2 Cor 5), and it just like a person is longing for heaven so much they speak in the heavenly language (let me caveat that – you heart can groan the same in English too). Now prophecy is a word from God, and an example of that would

be me right now, the Spirit of prophecy coming upon me, and I would speak in “English” (a language you could clearly understand) and I would say, “the Lord is saying right now, fear not my little children, fear not the uncertainty of your times, fear not for I am with you, and My hand will be upon you.

2 Corinthians 5:1-4 (NKJV) ¹For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ²**For in this we groan**, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, ³if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. ⁴For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.

Romans 8:22-23 (NKJV) ²²For we know that **the whole creation groans** and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Boil it down Another Notch

Let me boil it down one more notch, and that is that:

- Tongues – is man speaking to God
- Prophecy – is God speaking to Man

Remember if Ever Someplace / 1st – Speak, 2nd – Interpret, 3rd – Magnify – not prophecy

Now remember those two differences and should you ever be someplace and a person speaks in tongues, and says it is from the Lord. Here is how you check if that is true:

1. First someone speaks in tongues, and you can't understand what they say.
2. Secondly, someone present in the room (and it could be the same person) gives an interpretation, for the Bible says the prophet is subject to the prophets honor, meaning that if God lays it on a person's heart to speak a word in tongues, God will also confirm it to that same person that someone else that is present in the room will have the interruption. So if someone speaks in tongues and there is no interpretation, the tongue was not from the Lord, but was from the person's flesh.
3. Thirdly, if the interpretation given is anything other than a conversation to the Lord, man speaking to God (such as – Lord you are beautiful, you are mighty – remember tongues is man speaking to God), but rather what I so often hear the interrupter say is, “Thus says the Lord, someone here blablabla”, now that isn't a tongue from the Lord for that isn't prayer conversation to the Lord, that is a word from the Lord (prophecy), God speaking to man.

1 Corinthians 14:27-33 (NKJV) ²⁷If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret. ²⁸But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. ³⁰But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. ³²And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. ³³For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

(Acts 10:44 NKJV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

(Acts 10:45 NKJV) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

*(Acts 10:46 NKJV) For they heard them speak with tongues and **magnify God**. Then Peter answered,*

2 not intermingled – not Confusion / Lots strange Behavior / Let all Things be Done

Tongues is man speaking to God, and Prophecy is God speaking to man. The two do not intermingle, because God is not the Author of confusion (1 Cor 14:33), and that is exactly what would happen. There is a lot of strange behavior that happens in reference to tongues, and a lot of people get all mixed up with it. If Christians would just apply these basics we just discussed, they would immediately know if they were someplace that wasn't a good place to be. Lots of what happen in those churches are learn't behavior, not Spirit-filled behavior. Let all things be done decently and in order,” Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:40. The Pentecostal churches have the first part of that verse down pat: Let all things be done! The Baptist churches are experts on the second part: Decently and in order. I believe that the Lord wants us to experience both portions. Let all things be done, yes, but decently and in order.

1 Corinthians 14:40 (NKJV) ⁴⁰Let all things be done decently and in order.

I remember Church in Louisiana

I am glad that the Scriptures are so clear, for I have been in some places that were just plain crazy. I was in this one church in Louisiana, and the worship totally rocked, the pastor preached with power, and I was like awesome I found me a place to call home and get fed and have fellowship. But then.....it was like it two differently churches as the pastor started the "Spirit-filled part". Man I heard everything from screeching eagles (I guess from Isaiah saying mount up on the wings of eagles), I heard roaring lions (I guess the Lion of Judah), I saw this lady convulsing in front of me, people jumping up and down, and at first I said to myself this crazy, but then I said well maybe I'm just stuffy and stiff to the move of the Spirit because of my religious upbringing with all its dogma, but then thankfully it all became clear, because someone "supposedly" spoke in tongues, and then another, and another, and never was there an interpretation, and the pastor was amen to them all, and I just said, nope this is not of the Lord, for this is clearly not in alignment with the Word. So, funny thing just about that time I think the pastor really did get a word from the Lord, but he misunderstood what the Lord was saying, for the pastor said someone is here right now and you think this is all a bunch of baloney, all the flesh, I want you to know that you are quenching the Spirit. I said to myself, I guess that is my cue to leave, and I turned and walk out. I can only imagine what the pastor said about me as I did. Thank God for the Word so we can read through the works of the flesh and the works of the Spirit.

Important – Tongues is a Gift / Easter Gifts – Father deemed Appropriate / Puffed Up

Let me add this before we move off this subject, for it is most important; tongues is a gift; there are those who say if you don't speak in tongues there is something wrong with you, and some will even say you are not saved. They say such things because they don't understand the Scripture. Last Easter we gave gifts to our kids, my fourteen year old got a new lacrosse stick, and my 2 year old got Silly Bubbles. Now did they both receive gifts, yes. Were they the same gifts, no. They were gifts based on what we wanted to give them, what we felt would bless them the most. Oh yes the 14 year old may have enjoyed the Silly Bubbles for a few minutes, but on Friday's game he thoroughly enjoyed the new stick, it was a much better gift. My 2 year old loves anything that is bigger than himself, but a regulation lacrosse stick just wouldn't be very useful to him at this time. Both received gifts that their father felt was appropriate for them. So too does God. Don't get beat up or beat down for the gifts you don't have, but accept the gifts you do have and use them for His glory. I share this last thought on the matter, I have experienced that there are many of people who do speak in tongues, and they feel puffed up about it, they feel more spiritual than the people who don't speak in tongues, they even look down upon those who don't speak in tongues as spiritually weak or immature. Their mentality is carnal, it isn't spiritual, so that immediately defeats their mindset that they are spiritually more mature; and then I wonder if God had to give them the gift because in their spiritual immaturity, if they didn't have the gift they would waste their whole life crying about not having it. It is about the Gift Giver, not the gift, and Paul would say:

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NKJV) ¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Nothing without Love – It's all about Love

And the greatest Gift!, verse 18 – *the repentance to life*

(Acts 11:18 NKJV) When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Seems Odd Phrase / Doesn't Say – Salvation, Eternal or New Life / Turn away to Life

God has granted "Repentance to Life"; that seems like an odd phrase when you think about. It doesn't say God has granted eternal life, or God has granted salvation, or God has granted new life, but that God has granted (given a chance for) repentance to life. To get a clear meaning we would do well to just take the definition of repentance and use that, and repentance means "to turn away". So the sentence could read that God has granted to the Gentiles "to turn away" to

life. So if turning to life, then it would mean God is giving every man a chance to turn away from death. In the context of our passage, that granting comes from Peter presented to the household of Cornelius, and that is Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The granting of the turning away from death to life, comes through Jesus Christ.

What Love

What Love it is, for I am nothing without love, but I am everything in His love, and it all started with His love, and my life just becomes a response to that love as I dwell and mediate on it, the greatest gift, the opportunity to receive eternal life.;

Isaiah 61:10 (NKJV)¹⁰ *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,*

My soul shall be joyful in my God;

For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation,

He has covered me with the robe of righteousness,

As a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments,

And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

Little Jesus'

Acts 11:18-30

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Gospel has come to Gentiles / Pick up in Verse 18 / Little Jesus'

The gospel has come to the Gentiles, an amazing move of the Spirit of God, we left off at verse 18 and will start there for our study today. Verses 18-30 are beautiful passages of Scriptures, and in verse 26 will be the first mention of followers being called "Christians", which means "Little Christ's", and wonderfully through this whole passage we will see people acting just like Jesus as we see them sharing the gospel (as they are scattered due to persecution), encouraging the believers (as we will see Barnabas who means "Son of encouragement"), we will see the teaching of the believers (as Saul will be called upon to come teach), and then we will see believers taking care of each other as a famine comes upon the land. So we see people acting just like Jesus, and thus the title of this message, "Little Jesus" and if you want to be like Jesus, here are some great examples and points.

(Acts 11:26 NKJV) And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

(Acts 11:18 NKJV) When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

Accused – Obsessed w/ Repentance / Teach more on Marriage / Books – Fail / Why

I have been accused many a times of being obsessed with sin and repentance, they say you don't teach enough on marriages, on relationships, on finances, I say thank you for noticing, for I am only obsessed with sin and repentance, because the Bible is obsessed with it. Oh the beauty of verse-by-verse studying through the bible, for you study in the balance of what the bible teaches. Do you know how many books there are on marriage in the Christian Book store, do you know many Christian self-help books are written each year? But why are so many marriages ending in divorce, why are so many Christians still in bondage, living anything but a victorious Christian life? I'll tell ya, it is the refusal to die to self and follow after the Lord with all their heart, mind, and soul.

Confusion Repentance finished at Salvation / Only Day 1 / Turn Away – Unto

There is a great confusion among the body that the major thrust of repentance is done at salvation, and then from there the major thrust is prayer, bible study, and attending church. Repentance is the turning away from, and the turning unto, in Biblical terms it is the turning away of going our way, and the turning unto the way God is going. Repentance is a daily thing, and day one was on the day of salvation, and day two was the day after salvation, day three, four, and on. I calculated that I am somewhere on day 6,400 (that's about 17.5 years).

Getting Saved not enough to Save Marriage / Marriage Fail – Fail to Turn

Getting saved isn't enough to save your marriage; marriages fail because one or both parties refuse to repent, to turn from the way they want to go and go the way the Lord wants them to go (the divorce rate amongst evangelicals is 1 in 2 today). People are living anything but the

victorious Christian life because they refuse to follow the way the Lord is going and they go the way they want to go, whether it be to letting their eyes see things they shouldn't be seeing, or allowing their bodies to take in things it shouldn't be receiving, or down to one of the most common places – laziness.

I can teach with Passion & Power / Axe to the Rope – Repent is Free

And I can teach this with joy in my heart, I can teach this with excitement, I don't feel that I am laying a burden on the hearers, but an axe to the ropes that may be snaring you, bolt cutters to the chains that may be binding you, for repentance is freeing, for God has granted to us repentance to life. I speak this with passion because I have lived it in power for 6,400 days.

Barnabas and Saul at Antioch

(Acts 11:19 NKJV) Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

Following Stoning / The Norm – Not Exception / Obama the Rock Star

Following the stoning of Stephen, a wave of persecution scattered the church. For many Christians today they believe the goal and purpose of life is to arrive at death comfortably; Persecution is the norm, not the exception (2 Tim 3), it is promised for true believers. Did anyone mention morals in your office conversations during this Presidential campaign, how well did that go? Today it is not even about being outspoken, today if you even make a peep about anything moral you are considered a bigot and narrow-minded. A broad lifestyle does not equal being broad-minded, if actually equates to being narrow-minded because the person is only focusing on earth, and not considering heavenly and spiritual things. This week we got a real good look at what it will be like for the post-rapture believers who aren't excited about the world's man (the anti-christ), for I saw a rock-star reception for a man who people think is the answer, the one who will fix the world, but if anyone said I don't agree with his position on abortion, homosexuality, close allies with Hollywood who promote all kinds of sexual immorality, and a man who wants to talk "dialogue" with a group that wants nukes and says Israel needs to be wiped off the face of the planet, well you were anything but well received. The anti-christ will make Obama's current charisma look like play time, and the world's mess will dwarf what we currently see (and there are already people asking if Obama is the Messiah – Newsweek and the UK Telegraph even ran articles on all the people asking if it is so), and people will look to the anti-christ as the hope of the world, and anyone who doesn't join the cheer will be looked upon as being part of the reason why the world is so messed up, and they will suffer unimaginable persecution (Rev 17)

2 Timothy 3:10-12 (NKJV) ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Revelation 17:3-6 (NKJV) ³So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. ⁴The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. ⁵And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

⁶I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Louis Farrakhan

By the way, speaking of a glimpse of the last days when everyone is desiring change, addressing a large crowd behind a podium Feb. 24 with a Nation of Islam Saviour's Day 2008 sign, Farrakhan proclaims:

"You are the instruments that God is going to use to bring about universal change, and that is why Barack has captured the youth. And he has involved young people in a political process that they didn't care anything about. That's a sign. When the Messiah speaks, the youth will hear, and the Messiah is absolutely speaking."

Wow, is this a precursor to the last days? We actually see a major world leader for a major world religion saying that a man who professes Jesus is the Messiah?

Believers spread Out / Gospel is on the Move

Here in our story today the believers are spread out to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (See the Map). Phenice was located in the southern part of present-day Israel, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Cyprus was an island off the coast of present-day Syria. So the gospel is definitely on the move.

Scattered – Diaspora / Seeds planted in New Soil

The word used here for “scattered” is “diaspora”, and it means to “cast seed”. The believers in Israel were God’s seed and the persecution was used of God to plant them in new soil so they could bear fruit:

Matthew 13:37-38 (NKJV) ³⁷He answered and said to them: *“He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one.*

Scattering brought Furtherance – Jesus Movement / Not Satan Move / Remember Next Move

I think it most important that I make this point again as this region will start seeing more and more transplants of people because of NSA and the Base Realignment (BRAC). The scattering of these early Christians brought the furtherance/spreading of the gospel, because it is the Jesus Movement, not Satan’s movement. Jesus is calling the shots, not Satan, and remember that in your life when you are told that the company is downsizing, when this university will accept you, but the other one won’t, or when this job opens up, but the other one says no (even though that is one that you really wanted. Remember that you military folks when your next duty assignment comes in.

Important – Remember Why / To Preach the Word

Remember that, but as important, remember why - *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.* Do you notice we don’t read that they were scattered and complained everywhere they went for having to leave their homeland, but they scattered and preached Christ everywhere they went. We are seeing quite possibly the largest missionary send-off in the history of the church.

(Acts 8:4 NKJV) *Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.*

I’ve met Plenty People who have Moved / Not Realize the “Why” / They Loved Jerusalem

I’ve met many a people who have been scattered abroad, some have taken jobs here in this area who use to live in some real beautiful places and went to some real great churches in this country, but when they come here to this area they just hated it. They missed their social activities, they missed their church, and I can understand how hard that is (because I’ve been there) – but what I have found in every case, of those people who basically all they ever did was complain (or be depressed) about where they where, who talk about how they long be where they once were, what I have found (bar none), is that in all those cases, those people never engaged in the spreading of the Gospel. They never came to the realization that they were scattered by God, and that God scattered them for the furtherance of the Gospel. I bet if ya asked any of the people who were scattered in verse 19, they would have said they loved living in Jerusalem, they loved living in the City of God, they loved seeing the sun bouncing off the Temple, they loved being in the center of the religion, they loved being close to family, and they loved their familiar surroundings. I’m sure they loved where they were at, but what we read here is that when they were scattered, we don’t read of complaining or depression, but of proclaiming and power – as the Gospel went into Judea and Samaria.

If you Get Scattered – Remember Why / Embrace it – Enjoy It / Little Jesus’

If you get scattered someday down the road, when your seed has settled from being scattered, may you always be reminded of why you were scattered (for the furtherance of the Gospel), embrace it and enjoy it. It is the Jesus Way, of the Jesus Movement.

What the Little Jesus’ Do

It is what the “Little Jesus” do.

(Acts 11:19 NKJV) Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

(Acts 11:20 NKJV) But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 11:21 NKJV) And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

Check Flow / Jews Only

Check out the flow here

- Verse 19 – to the Jews only they spoke.
- Verse 20 – they spread out to the Hellenist (The Hellenist (“Grecians”) were the Greek-speaking Jews who had come to Palestine from other nations, and therefore may not have spoken Aramaic, while the “Hebrews” were Jewish residents of the land who spoke both Aramaic and Greek.
- Verse 21 – a whole bunch of people are getting saved.

Problem / No doubt Gospel to Gentiles

Here we see a problem, although last weeks study was titled, “Let there be no doubt”, and it was all about God making it totally clear that gospel, the blood of Jesus Christ, was for the non-Jew also. Now although that was made clear, we still see the early church pretty much ignoring that, and just kept sharing the gospel with the Jewish people.

Springboard to Critical / God not Critical of Them / God has Custom-made Man

I think we could have spring boarded from here and took the opportunity to be somewhat critical about these early believers for ignoring the Gentiles, and for keeping the gospel to the Jews, but here is what I love, “God doesn’t”. God has a man he is readying, a man who is “custom made” for the job, and we will see him in verse 26, our brother Saul of Tarsus.

This is Freeing / I struggle to share with Some – Middle-aged Men / Philly Stories

This is freeing to me, for there are some people I really struggle to share the gospel with, but then there are others that I can see “I was “custom made” to share with. I have no problem going up to a total male stranger who is younger (like 25 and younger), but I really struggle with middle-age white males, it always seems like a brick wall to me. Now let me say this before I sound super-spiritual and you think I super-E (the super-duper evangelist); the majority of times I am just giving them a tract, telling them here is my number, if you ever want to talk about the things of the Lord give me a call. Getting to share the full-on gospel with those encounters are more rare than they are plenty (but I’m happy that I got a tract in their hands, and started them thinking about spiritual things, and have invited them to church). But back to my point, if I am walking down the road and see youths on one side, and middle-aged white males on the other, I’ll cross the street to go over to the youth, where the fishing is good I’ll say. I go where I feel most comfortable, and I don’t feel condemnation from God for doing so. I trust that God has someone who is custom-made to cover the “other” side of the street. When we were in Philadelphia the team was going door-to-door, that really isn’t my comfort zone. However, talk about white middle-aged males, man Chris was custom-made for them, and well-received, he had six of them one time huddled around him listen to every word. Me, I hung out at the park and the bus stop, talking to the youth and the young adults, and ended up sharing with hundreds.

The Renee Challenge / Wayne Rejected

It is funny, well kind of, but sometimes we will be up in the city and Renee will give everyone a tract and say ok you have to give your tract out before we get back to the car. And poor Wayne, it is like he will get rejected 10 times in a row, and I tell him not to get discouraged, just keep-on-keeping-on, but the fact of the matter is, I always leave him hanging because I’ll cross the street saying, alright I got this young kid, you take that white middle-age male over there (ah I’m bad).

Man at Bible College – Street Team / Not to Debate – go Witness

When I lead the street witnessing team at the Bible College, one day this young man came up and said I want to go street witnessing with your team, but you may not want me to go. I said and why is that, and he said because I don't believe God loves everyone, I think He only loves the chosen. Well rather than spending the next 3 months discussing theology and not having time to go out witnessing, I just said to him, hey not a problem, you just come and share Christ with the people you believe God does love and has called, and I'll cover the others, he said, hey great, and so he came faithfully every week and had much fruit in his fishing.

My Point – Share who Comfort / Trust in the Custom-Made

My point is obvious, share with whom you are comfortable with, and don't beat yourself up for not sharing over here or sharing over there, for we see in our passage today, God wasn't critical against these early believers for not sharing with the Gentiles, for He had a custom-made vessel prepared to go reach the Gentiles, Saul of Tarsus. And consider the flip-side of this, and that is that your comfort zone is who you were custom-made for by God.

BUT – Sometimes it is only You / Be left Speechless

But I need to say this before moving on, there have been plenty of times where the Lord has spoken to me, go to the other side of the street (to that middle-age white male) and I have to decide at that moment whether to be like Peter and say, Not-so Lord, or come down from my comfortable rooftop and go, like Peter eventually did. I have to say, it has been those times where I have been totally blown away by what God did, and I go away speechless, only able to glorify God in my heart at what I just saw Him do. Sometimes folks, we will be the only one on the street, and sometimes there will only be one fishing hole, and God will say – Go!

(Acts 11:18 NKJV) When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life."

What the Little Jesus' Do

It is what the "Little Jesus" do.

(Acts 11:22 NKJV) Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.

Antioch – 3rd Largest (500K) / Daphne the goddess – Sexual Immorality

Antioch, the third largest city in the Roman Empire (about 500,000 people), the city was dedicated to the Greek goddess, Daphne, who had been seduced by the Greek god, Apollo, so a very sexually immoral area (as goddess propagated). With the possible exception of Corinth, immorality abounded in the city of Antioch more so than in any other city of the empire.

Last Place – not the last Place / Last Place – Great Indicator

People no doubt said this is the last place people would turn to Jesus, but it wasn't the last place in the world that Jesus wanted to show His nail pierced hands to. I think we can so often think that of a person who is indulging themselves in all kinds of the things of the world like drugs, sex, and alcohol, but I think truly the deeper they are into those types of things, it is an indication to me that they are trying to fill a void in their life (created by God – Romans 8:20), and that excites me because I believe they are prime to hear why they have that void in their lives. The Obama rock star reception will eventually crash because he will fail them all when change doesn't come as quick or even at all. I can only imagine how far Obama's jaw dropped when he got his full disclosure on Thursday of what really is going on in terms of national Security, terrorism, and the war. He is going to be, wow I didn't know all that when I make campaign promises. His immediate withdrawal was never that immediate, as he always had been saying in the "details" that that meant about 18 months, but people just weren't listen to the details. For many people, the change won't come quick enough, for the hearts of the people want change and they want it now, but you and I know that the change the world offers is only fleeting, it only sure promise is that it will change again. But we here at CCAAC won't miss the opportunity to speak to the hearts

of those who are seeking change, because I believe what we are seeing is the heart of many people, they know that something is missing – thus our road sign campaign – Want Change? 1 Corinthians 5:17.

Romans 8:20 (NKJV) ²⁰*For the creation was subjected to futility (emptiness), not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Let me Share before Moving On / Not Black & White Theology – But Living Person

Let me share this with that goes along the lines of sharing with people you are comfortable with, and that is, don't turn your witness into something formal. Don't get yourself all worried or uptight, don't talk about Jesus like you are presenting a business plan; but rather when you talk about Jesus, talk about like the relationship you have with Him, as a friend. Don't present the Jesus on the black and white pages, but share Him as the friend that He is, talk about Him like you know Him, not like the Theology says He is. I love to just tell people how awesome He is as I talk about that God wants to hang out with me, how sweet He is to me as I talk about how took the nails for me, how mighty He is as I talk about His creative powers when He shaped the earth. I talk about Him like I know Him personally, for I do. So just relax, and as you do people will notice that you really do have a personal, friend-to-friend relationship with Him, and they will see the difference between your relationship, and theirs, and prayerfully that will be what makes them want what you have – a personal and intimate relationship with the Creator of the Universe. For those people that is all they know Him as, a distant impersonal God on black and white pages, and if we get all nervous and tight, we are only reinforcing that; so bring Him to life, lift Him of the pages, from the black and white to the Living Light!

Believers send Barnabas

When the believers in Jerusalem heard folks were being saved in Antioch, they sent Barnabas to check it out.

(Acts 11:23 NKJV) **When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.**

Why Christians Glad - Grace

Verse 23 - had seen the grace of God - I love this phrase! People say, "Why are you Christians so glad?" "Because of the unmerited, undeserved, unearned grace of God," I answer. "You see, legalism makes people sour, but grace always produces great gladness."

(Acts 11:24 NKJV) **For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.**

Rom 3 – None Good / Unregenerate vs. Regenerated / Holy Spirit says he is Good

Lots of people love to say, there is none good, no not one (Rom 3), and that is true of the unregenerate man, but it is an insult to say that of the regenerated man who has been washed in the blood of Christ, who has been robed in His righteousness, for God says what He has cleansed let no one call common. How we need to look upon each other as precious, as good, to see others as Christ sees them. Think Barnabas was perfect, no! But the Holy Spirit chooses to identify him as "good" (same word used in Matthew 19 speaking that God is good), full of the Holy Spirit and faith. Barnabas is who we all are, what is now in us in this new life, and we now personally need to let those things rise to the surface that all who would look upon us would say, there is a good man/woman, they are just full of the Holy Spirit, oh and what faith!

Romans 3:10-12 (NKJV) ¹⁰*As it is written:*

"There is none righteous, no, not one;

¹¹ *There is none who understands;*

There is none who seeks after God.

¹² *They have all turned aside;*

They have together become unprofitable;

There is none who does good, no, not one."

Matthew 19:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" ¹⁷So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

Acts 11:9 (NKJV) ⁹But the voice answered me again from heaven, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common.'

Barnabas picture of Us / Let it Rise / How – Continue with Lord / Teach what Live

How do we do that, Barnabas is the example, and it is quite simple, - simply continue with the Lord, that is what Barnabas did, and thus he only taught what he lived. Teach what you live, live what you teach, and continue to abide in Him:

(Acts 11:23 NKJV) When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

John 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

What the Little Jesus' Do

It is what the "Little Jesus" do.

(Acts 11:25 NKJV) Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul.

Search up and Down / Barnabas – Son of Encouragement / Ultimate Encourager

The word translated "to seek" is anazeteo, which means "to search up and down, or high and low (meaning Barnabas didn't know exactly where Saul was except in Taurus)." It's used only one other time by Luke—in Luke 2 where he wrote that Mary and Joseph searched diligently for Jesus after Passover. The idea of anazeteo is that of a parent frantically, desperately, energetically searching for a lost child. And that's exactly what Barnabas, the "son of consolation," the quintessential discipler, the ultimate encourager, did. He searched high and low for Saul, who had been in Tarsus for seven to ten years, living in obscurity.

What a Gift / Hey make it your Gift / Search for them High and Low

I know some of you have been gifted and graced by the Lord to be Barnabases. Blessings on you—what a wonderful calling! You're encouragers, "sons and daughters of consolation." You're one-on-one kind of people. You have no need to be the big gun or the head hog at the trough. Like Barnabas, you're "good men and women—full of the Holy Ghost and of faith." I encourage you to search high and low for that one who, like Paul, is stuck off in obscurity—loving the Lord and committed to the Word, but in need of someone to throw an arm around him and strengthen him in the Lord.

What the Little Jesus' Do

It is what the "Little Jesus" do.

(Acts 11:26 NKJV) And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Little Christians / Little Jesus

What does the word "Christian" mean? It means "Little Christ." You know really the word Christians has been so misused, everyone says they are a Christian, they like being a Christian it's just the Jesus part and His Word they aren't into. So I am no longer calling you or myself a Christians (little Christ), I have decided "Little Jesus" is better. Wouldn't it be great if someone called you "Little Jesus" because you had so much of Him in you?

Barnabas looked Around / I know the Perfect Man

Barnabas looked around and said, "Wow, here are all of these Hellenists, Grecians, and pagans being added to the church. Who can really speak to them effectively? I know! The guy I left at Tarsus seven or eight years ago—Saul!"

Notice the Flow – Preach, Exhort, Teach

Notice the flow here:

- In verse 20, men from Cypress “preached the Lord Jesus.”
- In verse 23, Barnabas “exhorted them.”
- In verse 26, Paul “taught much people.”

That’s generally the order of effective ministry: First, there is preaching as we present the gospel evangelistically. Then comes encouragement as we say, “I rejoice with you. Cleave to the Lord.” Finally, there is teaching in order that believers may mature in their faith. Preaching, encouraging, and teaching—all three are important and essential for a healthy ministry.

What the Little Jesus’ Do

It is what the “Little Jesus” do.

Relief to the Famine in Judea sent by the Church

(Acts 11:27 NKJV) And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

(Acts 11:28 NKJV) Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

(Acts 11:29 NKJV) Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.

(Acts 11:30 NKJV) This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

The Prophet Agabus

And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great famine throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. This famine was historically recorded by the way.

Send Relief / We make Living by what Get – But make a life by what we Give

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea. It has been wisely said that we make a living by what we get. But we make a life by what we give. There was life in the early church because they gave. After hearing the word of prophecy, they didn’t say, “Wow, there’s going to be a drought, huh? We better store our beans, buy guns, get gold, and build shelters.” No, they said, “There’s a drought? Let’s take an offering. Tough times? How can we help?” I think we are going to get plenty of opportunity in the immediate future to apply this one.

What the Little Jesus’ Do

It is what the “Little Jesus” do.

Chapter 12

But Prayer (Acts 12:1-25)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Church is Spreading – So Satan is Stretching / End Result – Word Multiplied

Well the church is on the move, the church is spreading out, the Christians are being scattered for the furtherance of the gospel, and as God moves, so does Satan, and we will see here in chapter 12 Satan is stretching out his hand to harass the church – but in the end it will produce God's intended end:

(Acts 12:24 NKJV) *But the word of God grew and multiplied.*

Herod's Violence against the Church

(Acts 12:1 NKJV) Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church.

(Acts 12:2 NKJV) Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

Persecution the Norm / Dave Ramsey

Again, persecution is the norm, not the exception of Christianity, (now you won't find this verse in your Precious Promise Book) but this promise only applies to Christians who want to live godly in Christ Jesus, for all other Christians this promise does not apply. I loved it when a caller called into the Dave Ramsey show and said do I have to tithe, and Dave Ramsey said only Christians are required to tithe, everyone else is free to do with their money as they wish. So, back to persecution, have you been persecuted lately?

2 Timothy 3:12 (KJV) ¹²Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

2 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV) ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Sons of Thunder / Mother's Request / Prophecy Fulfilled

This is James, one of the sons of thunder, whose mother had come to Jesus and asked, "Let my sons sit, one on your right, one on your left, when you come into Your Kingdom. Jesus said that they would drink of the same cup, and here we see prophecy fulfilled.

Matthew 20:20-23 (NKJV) ²⁰Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. ²¹And He said to her, *"What do you wish?"* She said to Him, *"Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."* ²²But Jesus answered and said, *"You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"* They said to Him, *"We are able."* ²³So He said to them, *"You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father."*

Why die so Young / Look at his Equipping / Why – the answer – He does!

Why does God allow a great apostle to die so early? James walked with Jesus for some 3 years, he was one of eleven who went to the greatest seminary in the history of world "JCU" (Jesus Christ University). Man could you imagine getting that type of training today, could you imagine those sermons after walking and watching Jesus live. Yet God chooses to let him die at such an early age, James is really just coming into the prime of his ministry, he is probably 45-55 years old, still has energy, while at the same time full of maturity from years with Jesus and life on

earth. Now he is dead, why does God allow it? The answer.....He does. He does and He makes it clear that He does throughout the Scriptures and here is one of those examples in James, an Apostle.

Years Wondering – Might not have the Time / Psalmist

I can spend years trying to figure out why, but I might not have that kind of time, what I have is the promise of the uncertainty, and that we know not when we will die. The psalmist said:

*Psalms 39:4 (NKJV)⁴ "LORD, make me to know my end,
And what is the measure of my days,
That I may know how frail I am.*

Psalms 90:12 (NKJV) So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Only have today – to Love Spouse / Invest in Kids

You only have today to love your spouse, to love your kid, to invest in them. Use today, cherish today, seize the day! Let us measure our life by days, not by years, taking nothing for granted.

Egyptian Pyramid

I read an article about a team of archeologist who had gathered to open one of the inner vaults of an Egyptian pyramid. They expected to see what they had saw in prior inner vault explorations, the typical pyramid inventory, but for this one they were totally wrong. They expected to see the typical morgue type room, prepared for the pharaoh's after-life, but instead they found what was more like a family parlor than a morgue. Tables were adorned with dried flowers, pictures hung from the wall, a dinning table was set with golden goblets, and there were several scrolls for reading on another table. They said the room had the feel of a Starbucks or a Barnes and Noble. What was mystifying to them was a perfectly preserved line of hieroglyphics sketched across the front wall. Linguistic scholars were summoned to decipher the ancient writing, and the archeologist wondered in great anticipation what hidden truth will history reveal, what clues have the ancients left us to discover. When the writing was finally decoded, the words of the long-departed Pharaoh (loosely translated), "*Oh for the good ole days.*"

Century after Century – Looking back – Looking Forward

How it seems that century after century man continually is the same, as man is continually looking back, or continually looking forward. I like how it was back when, or I can't wait for change to take office, things will be great and grand then. Today, today, today is what we have.

Today – What a great day Today Is / Good Ole Days – Busting in Doors / Storm my House

Today, and what a great day it is for us Americans. The good ole days, this passage before us today is the good ole days of the Church, doors busting down and Christians being dragged away imprisoned and killed. As I laid in my warm bed Monday night, the house was silent, my baby sleeping in his crib, my teenager in his room, my wife asleep by my side, and I let myself imagine what it would be like for my door to get busted in, swarms of intense, pre-prepared heavily armed men to come swarming into my house because of my sermon on Sunday. The house calm and the quietness would be replaced by them dragging me away, grabbing my baby (to hear his screams), the fear upon my teenager, and the panic within my wife's heart. I pictured me reaching out my hand to touch them one more time, wishing I had one more day with them.

These are the Good Ole Days / Live in the Today

These are the good ole days Christian, don't miss them wishing back on yesterday, or spending your whole today trying to secure your tomorrow. Today, today, today is what we have!

(Acts 12:3 NKJV) And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Typical Politician

The quintessential politician here, oh you like that, you'll vote for me, ok I'll do it some more to get some votes. I'll harass and trouble others who have less of a voice in order to please those who

have a greater voice – it won't be what's good for all, just what will get me favor with the greater and louder voice. The Christian voice was very faint in this last election, and certain groups voices seemed to be at a roar. History has repeated itself.

(Acts 12:4 NKJV) So when he had arrested him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover.

James Dead – Peter soon to Die – Herod Rampage / Church gripping Heart / They Pray
James is dead, Peter is in prison, Herod is on the rampage, and I'm sure the church is gripping their heart, wondering what is next, what do we do now. Well, verse 5 they simply turn to prayer. They won't plan a prison break, a march on the capital, a newspaper editorial, an internet website "Free Peter", where you can buy a t-shirt to wear around town, they simply turn to prayer.

Choose Prayer – God might just do Again / Herod thinks it Too – 16 Guards

They turn to prayer because they know God might just choose to do what he has done before, as in Acts 5 Peter and John simply walk out of prison. Now they aren't the only ones who believe that because Herod has Peter chained to four squads of soldiers (that's 16 total), which meant that 2 soldiers would be chained to Peter at one time and the other 2 would stand guard at the door. The other 12 would either be sleeping or standing guard in another location, and they had one focus – guard the prisoner. So this is a lot of security going on here for a fisherman. But they knew Peter has a history of jailbreaks, as he walked out of prison in Acts 5.

Acts 5:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ²⁰"Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life."

Lots of Human Flesh here – We see Life Example of Ephesians 6

So the church knows God may choose to do the same as He had done before; and Herod knows that it is possible for the same thing to happen again. The worst criminal would have had two soldiers—one chained to each arm. But Herod ordered four soldiers chained to Peter to make sure he wouldn't escape. So here we truly see Ephesians 6 in a real life example, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but principality and powers. It won't come down to the flesh, but what God chooses to happen.

Ephesians 6:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

[An Angel frees Peter from Prison](#)

(Acts 12:5 NKJV) Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church.

(Acts 12:6 NKJV) And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison.

Luke 18

Jesus told His disciples pray without ceasing, for as long as we are praying there is hope, – and so they do:

Luke 18:1 (NKJV) ¹Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart,

KJV of this Verse

I like the King James Version of this passage; it simply says "But Prayer":

Acts 12:5 (KJV) ⁵Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.

James Dead – Peter Imprisoned – Herod holding the Cards / BUT PRAYER / Lock It IN

James is dead, Peter is in prison, Herod is holding all the cards, **But Prayer!** Oh Christian may you write that somewhere where you can continually see it, **But Prayer!** May your mind lock those words into your long-term and short-term memory – **But Prayer!**

- The foes are mighty, who can overcome them – But Prayer
- The chains are heavy, who can break them – But Prayer
- The prison is locked and guarded, who can storm their gates – But Prayer
- All the cards are against me, who can trump the hand they are holding – But Prayer
- I have nothing left, – But Prayer – and when you are down to nothing, nothing but prayer, now God can work.

Ever feel like This – Hopeless? / What do – Rest in Lord / Sleep because Trust

Do you ever feel like this, like you are in a totally hopeless place, locked-in and chained-up, and the people around you are unmovable, absolutely no way to get them to change their mind. What do we do when it seems like the powers-to-be are holding all the cards? – Rest in the Lord. Peter you will die tomorrow, yet Peter is sleeping; in fact he is in such a deep sleep the angel has to whack him upside the head to wake him up. Peter can sleep, because he has come to that place that he fully trusts in the Lord with all his heart, and he doesn't lean on his own understanding, but in all his way he acknowledges, ok Lord you are on the throne, and I submit to your will.

Psalms 37:7 (NKJV) ⁷ Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him;

*Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way,
Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,

And lean not on your own understanding;

⁶ *In all your ways acknowledge Him,*

And He shall direct your paths.

I enter Turmoil – Think not Like / But Prayer – Settle in to Prayer / Come in Line / Blanket

I enter into turmoil when I fear that God is going to allow something to happen to me that I don't like. I am in turmoil until something changes, **But Prayer!** It is when I come back and settle into prayer, and let God speak and minister to me, that I can come into a place of rest like Peter did. That I come to that place that I see and agree, and am empowered to walk through – *His will be done*; for prayer will bring us in-line with the knowledge that He is with us, and His hand is upon us, and that we are not in this alone, and we can sleep with the comfortable blanket, the "peace that passeth understanding" (see Philippians 4:7),

Matthew 26:39 (NKJV) ³⁹*He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."*

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

All Kinds of Prisons / Bitterness – Motherhood – Money – Peer Pressure / But Prayer

There are all kinds of prisons aren't there. The prison of bitterness of something or someone that wronged you. Moms, you own homes at times can seem like a prison, everywhere you look are the iron bars of laundry, house cleaning, cooking, all that seem to keep you locked in your home. Prison of financial worries, prison of peer pressure. There are all kinds of things that seem like prisons, that keep us from rest, but Peter found rest even within a prison, and you will too – **But Prayer!**, as the Lord will come and speak and minister to you, but we need to make time to enter into, the **But Prayer!** I come to that place believing, prayer makes a difference, God is in control, and that I can cast all my cares on Him because He cares for me:

1 Peter 5:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

(Acts 12:7 NKJV) Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands.

(Acts 12:8 NKJV) Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me."

(Acts 12:9 NKJV) So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

(Acts 12:10 NKJV) When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

(Acts 12:11 NKJV) And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people."

Whose holding the Cards – Not Herod

Verse 11 - and has delivered me from the hand of Herod - Who is holding all the cards? Who is on the throne, not Herod, for God has delivered Peter from the hand of Herod.

What an Experience - See the Video / What exactly Happened to Guards / God Holds Card

What an experience for Peter, to be sleeping and have an angel come and tap him on the head, break his chains, and then walk him past all the guards. I can't wait to see the video on this when we get to heaven. What happened to the guards chained to them, did God put them to sleep? What happened to the guards that were watching the door, did they hear the door squeak, did the feel the rush of wind as Peter and the angel passed (but they saw nothing), did they have to "suddenly" go to the bathroom and figure the other guys got it covered? I don't know, all I do know is that God holds all the cards, and if/when He chooses, He can influence people anyway He chooses, and I really don't know how that all works to be honest.

I saw it – Space Center / Ephesians 6

When I was at the Space Center working, after several months of seeking the Lord, I know the Lord was leading me to go to Bible College. It was a hard decision because I had such a great job and I really enjoyed launching rockets. Well, the launch business was still good, still had years and years of future launch contracts, but because of advance of technology, we could pack more on to a satellite than the years before, so we didn't need to make as many launches. So the company started to offer voluntarily layoffs, and you would get one week pay for every year of service. It was intended for the guys who had been there 30 years, who were going to retire in the next couple years. You needed the Site Directors approval to receive the "severance pay". I remember it like it was yesterday as I approached him with my request in hand, and I asked him to sign my paper, and he got mad – he said absolutely not, this isn't for you, this is meant for the guys with 30 years, not 6 years, I will not sign it. Now 6 weeks of pay before you were quitting for 2 years to go to Bible college was a lot of money, plus I would get 6 months of medical coverage. And I felt the Lord just say to me, just stand and don't speak or move. The Site Manager looked at me again, still mad, said no this is not for you.....then he took the paper out of my hand, took out his pen, and I can still remember it like it was yesterday, he starts to sign it, shaking his head, saying I have absolutely no idea why I am signing this. But he did, and you know what, it was like watching prison doors open. I walked away saying no man can stand against you if you so choose. And the Lord gave me the life lesson of:

Ephesians 6:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. ¹³Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

(Acts 12:12 NKJV) So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying.

(Acts 12:13 NKJV) And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.

(Acts 12:14 NKJV) When she recognized Peter's voice, because of her gladness she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter stood before the gate.

(Acts 12:15 NKJV) But they said to her, "You are beside yourself!" Yet she kept insisting that it was so. So they said, "It is his angel."

(Acts 12:16 NKJV) Now Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

(Acts 12:17 NKJV) But motioning to them with his hand to keep silent, he declared to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Go, tell these things to James and to the brethren." And he departed and went to another place.

Jesus' Half-Brother / Rhoda first Blonde in Bible

This James is Jesus' half-brother, not the other James (Son's of Thunder) for he has just been killed by Herod. This Rhoda, is the first blonde of the Bible, she forgets to let Peter in.

They Argue w/Rhoda / Don't disrupt the Prayer Meeting

They argue with Rhoda saying you are crazy, quit bothering us, and don't disrupt our prayer meeting, for this is important prayer meeting Peter is going to die tomorrow if God doesn't do a miracle. I think we should all be encouraged that it even "imperfect prayer" is still more powerful than the world.

Faith size of Mustard Seed / Faith enough just to Pray – Doors will Open

Jesus said faith the size of a mustard seed—just a tiny bit of faith—can move mountains (Matthew 17:20). If you have faith enough just to pray, things can happen. Doors can open. Ask Peter!

Matthew 17:20 (NKJV) ²⁰So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you.

The Power of Imperfect Prayer / Angels wonder Why / Parking Spot

Oh the power of prayer, even "imperfect prayer". Quite possible when we will get to heaven the angels will say to us, man why didn't you pray more, all that power you left untapped, and so much you did on your own, even the imperfect prayer was a hundredfold more powerful than anything you did in your own efforts. **But Prayer!**, oh beloved Christian believe in the power of prayer, how much we live like paupers when we have been given every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), take hold of them and use them in your life. About 5 years ago I moved on to a new program at work, and we had to really crank to get it up and running. So the manager went and got us all parking passes for right out in front of the building, it saved an easy 30 minutes a day from having to walk from the main lot almost 1 mile away. Well about a year later we changed locations but that parking spot was still great and the manager said when they (the parking authority) wanted the pass they would come take it back from me. I figured they would come take and give it to some "top dog". So when I would leave at night if some of the "top dogs" were on their way to their cars I'd walk a little slower, just in case they saw me get in my car and say hey you shouldn't park here. The sun dried out the plastic of the parking pass and it started to fall apart, so I'd glue it back together for I figured if I ask for a new one they are going to check and say you don't rank to have that spot. Well last month I come in through the guard gate, the guard stops me and says I need to see your pass, and I look and it was gone. Somehow it must have got thrown out when I was cleaning out the car or something. So I'm like well that is the end of that, I'm going to lose 30 minutes a day now walking back and forth, and so for some time I'm making the long walk. I accepted the fact, and finally got around to calling the Parking Authority to tell them I wasn't parking there any more so they could give it to someone who "ranked". So I call them, the guy says you don't want it anymore, that is a great spot, then the guy says you are entitled to that spot, your seniority entitles you to the spot. I had qualified for the benefit almost 3 years prior, yet for 3 years I'd walk the long way, drag my feet, and tape the old pass together even though all along I had qualified to park there, not to mention after I lose the pass making the long-long walk. How much a picture that is of my spiritual life sometimes, I have been given all kinds of blessings from heaven, they are just waiting for me to take, yet I keep walking the long way because I think yea I know I'm part of the Kingdom, but are all those blessings for me, or are they for the super-saints, the ones with the special "anointing", not just for a "Joe the Plumber" type Christian like me. The answer is yes, Christian please don't walk the long way, take the direct path to the throne of God and ask the Father, for we have not because we ask not (James 4:2) - and if you ask according to the will of the Father, He will

answer and supply according to His will for your life. How much we do without, simply because we don't ask.

(Ephesians 1:3 NKJV) *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

James 4:2-3 (NKJV) ²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Prayer part of Spiritual Blessings / Not if God Hears – But what do after Hears

Prayer is part of our spiritual inheritance, and it is riches beyond anything this world could ever offer. Seize it Christian! It is not if God hears, or maybe He will hear, but..... what will God do once He hears our prayers. Don't be afraid to ask!

(Acts 12:18 NKJV) Then, as soon as it was day, there was no small stir among the soldiers about what had become of Peter.

(Acts 12:19 NKJV) But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that they should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed there.

Guards put to Death

In those times if the prisoner escaped, then all the soldiers assigned to guarding him would be put to death, so 16 men died here. So 16 men are put to death. You can be sure Peter was sharing his faith with them, so you never know when the last time will come for hearing, and standing, as each man will stand before God and give an account for what he had done with Jesus Christ. If you have not made a commitment for Jesus Christ, today is the day:

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NKJV) ¹We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For He says:

*"In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you."*

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Herod's Violent Death

(Acts 12:20 NKJV) Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's country.

(Acts 12:21 NKJV) So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them.

(Acts 12:22 NKJV) And the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!"

(Acts 12:23 NKJV) Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died.

Group lay down Morals

So here is a group of people willing to lay down their morals in order to live comfortably. Amazing, hard to believe people would do that.

Second time walks out of Prison – Herod still doesn't get it / People say – If I see It

Now this is the second time Peter walks out of prison, and Herod still doesn't get it, there is a power at work here greater than himself. Lots of people say if they saw a miracle they would believe, not necessarily so. Herod, like the soldiers, time has run out, life goes from hearing, to standing, in a blink of an eye.

The Herod's can be Confusing / Great – Aristobulus – Antipas – Agrippa 1 & 2

Whenever Herod's name appears in Scripture, it's easy to get confused. "Wasn't Herod the one who killed the infants when Jesus was born? Didn't he die in Matthew 2? What's he doing here?" The answer to those questions lies in the fact that "Herod" is a family name. Herod the Great—the one who slaughtered the infants at Jesus' birth—was an Idumean—a descendant of Esau,

who married Mariamne—a descendant of the Maccabeans. Mariamne was one of Herod's eight wives, and one of at least six he killed. But before she died, Mariamne gave Herod a son named Aristobulus. Aristobulus was one of at least fifteen sons Herod killed (thinking they wanted to overthrow him as king). But before he died, Aristobulus fathered a son named Herod Agrippa. Realizing it was dangerous living in Jerusalem with people getting butchered right and left, Aristobulus' mother shipped her son to Rome—where he became friends with a man named Caligula. You might remember Caligula from your history lessons. He was a terribly depraved man, who, when he came into power, said, "I'm going to put my buddy Herod Agrippa on the throne in Jerusalem." Thus, it is Herod Agrippa of whom we read here in Acts 12. And, just for a little clarity, this Herod Agrippa had an uncle, whose name was Herod Antipas, and he is the one we read about who beheaded John the Baptist. Oh, and if this family wasn't strange enough, this Herod Agrippa we read about here in chapter 12 had a sister, and her name was Herodias, and she ended up marrying Herod Antipas, her uncle after leaving her husband, and thus why John the Baptist said they were in sin, and that would be the ultimate demise of John the Baptist. And finally, Herod Agrippa 1, will have a son called Herod Agrippa 2, and that is who Paul will stand before later here in the Book of Acts.

Life of Agrippa 1 / Educated – Wealthy - Foolish

Now this Herod Agrippa we read about history books tell us that was educated in Rome, he lived a very extravagant life, and he ran up a lot of debts in Rome. He finally came into disfavor with the ruling Caesar in Rome, who sort of banished him to an Idumean fortress called Malpha. There he became so despondent and discouraged that he contemplated suicide. But his wife talked him out of it, and then when his friend Caligula came into power, he gave Herod Agrippa reign over this region.

Interesting to Me – all things we want for our Kids / All had Chance for Jesus

How interesting to me that many of the things I have just mentioned is what every parent wants for their child, a good education, a comfortable life, and financial security. If my child has those things then I as a parent can rest, and feel that I did a good job. The problem is, this family from granddad, to uncle, to grandson, (and great grandson) all have had opportunity to see and handle Jesus Christ, and all have rejected them. Imagine what a difference this family would have been, the world we currently live in today, how history would have been changed if one of these men would have broken the family cycle and followed Jesus Christ. Imagine if granddaddy would have laid his power and position down and followed Jesus Christ, all of the Roman Empire would have been changed.

This is Amazing – Exact same Death

Want to hear something totally amazing, Herod's grandfather, Herod the Great, died of the same horrible disease (nearly exactly) (many teachers get confused and think that Josephus is recording Herod Agrippa, because the Bible account is identical to Josephus', but Josephus' account when read in context clearly is speaking about Herod the Great). You would have thought that Herod Agrippa would have said the last person in the world I want to be like is my grandfather, the man who killed my father; yet history records he lived and died nearly exactly as his grandfather did.

Josephus: "Herod was at Caesarea, presiding over the games in honor of Caesar. On the second day of the games, Agrippa entered at daybreak, clothed in a robe of silver, on which the rays of the morning sun were alighting, he appeared as if all irradiated with glory; numerous voices saluted him as a god; and on his making an oration to them they shouted, 'We have taken thee for a man, but henceforth we recognize in thee a god!' The king rebuked them not, nor showed any displeasure at this impiety; he saw an owl perched on a rope over his head, and immediately, taking this for an ill omen, he was filled with remorse, and was seized with violent pain in his bowels, exclaiming to his friends, 'Your god is already come to his life's end, and he who you saluted immortal is going to away to die.' To such a height did the pain rise that he had to be carried hastily into the palace, where, after 5 days torture, he expired in his 54th year."

Bordertown / As Close as Can Get / Isaac knew dad's Story / More Caught than Taught

There is a saying that I always say, and this is for believer and nonbeliever alike, "Dad's, your sons will follow you to Gerar". Gerar is on the border of Egypt; it is as close to Egypt (the world) as you can get without being in it. She is my sister, ring a bell? Isaac says the exact same thing

his father Abraham said in the exact same location some years prior. Why? Why did he do it? Because he knew his dad's story. May every father be convicted and challenged here in this study. Your son, your daughter too, will remember what you did. Here is the problem of going to the border town, your sons will do what you do, they will go where you go. More is caught than is taught! The teaching must be reinforced by the living.

(Genesis 26:6 NKJV) So Isaac dwelt in Gerar.

(Genesis 26:7 NKJV) And the men of the place asked about his wife. And he said, "She is my sister"; for he was afraid to say, "She is my wife," because he thought, "lest the men of the place kill me for Rebekah, because she is beautiful to behold."

There is no Room for Error / Don't buy the Lie

Parents, no room for error. Don't buy the lie, I need to make sure they are provided for materially, well educated, financially set. Herod had a castle, the finest food, the best education, but the grandson ended up following the way of his granddad, all the way down to receiving worship. Our kids need Jesus Christ, a soaking and saturation, and then He will lead them and guide them on the ways they should go. We need to do whatever it takes to lead them to Christ, daily, and never rest, never waiver, continually lead them and guide them to Him until we take our last breath, and we will know we have left them in good hands – the hands that loves them so much that He took the nails for them:

Matthew 6:31-33 (NKJV) ³¹*"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"* ³²*For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

³³*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

Only have today – to Love Spouse / Invest in Kids

You only have today to love your spouse, to love your kid, to invest in them. Use today, cherish today, seize the day! Let us measure our life by days, not by years, taking nothing for granted.

Psalm 90:12 (NKJV) *So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.*

Oh What a Task

Oh what a task how do I do that? BUT Prayer, and verse 24!

(Acts 12:24 NKJV) But the word of God grew and multiplied.

(Acts 12:25 NKJV) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

Kings Come – Kings Go / Only the Word endures Forever

Kings come, and kings go, Nations rise, and Nations fall, but the Word of God endures forever.

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV) ³⁵*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.*

Chapter 13

Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

As They Ministered to the Lord – 13:1-12

(Acts 12:24 NKJV) But the word of God grew and multiplied.

Finished Chp 12 with BUT / Herod – James – Throne – In Charge / Persecution - Multi

We finished the 12th chapter with verse 24, But..... But, seems to be a continual theme of chapter 12, Herod is doing this, but God was doing this, Herod is killing James and putting Peter in prison, but God was opening the prison doors. There was nothing left they could do, BUT Prayer. Herod was sitting on his throne, but God was sitting on His. Herod thinks he is in charge, but God smites him with worms. Persecution came against the church, but the Word of God multiplied. Christian, thank God for the “But God” in the Bible, it is the difference between life and death (Romans 5:8), and despair and hope. With the “But God” in our life, we no longer live at the mercy of this fallen world (that has no mercy), but at the “will” of God (who is full of mercy and love).

Romans 5:6-8 (NKJV) ⁶For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Barnabas and Saul Appointed

(Acts 12:25 NKJV) And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

(Acts 13:1 NKJV) Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

(Acts 13:2 NKJV) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Acts 13:3 NKJV) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Final Part – Paul’s Missionary Journeys

We begin our final transition in the Book of Acts as the gospel will now spread to the outer parts of the world as the book transitions to the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul.

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

End Peter’s Half – Start Paul’s Half

End of the First half of Acts (Peter’s half – as we won’t read too much more about Peter), and now the beginning of the second half of Acts (Paul’s half as he will be the central figure that points people to Christ).

(Acts 13:1 NKJV) Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

Prophets Reveal – Teachers Ground

certain prophets and teachers - Prophets are those who, under the inspiration of the Spirit, guide the church as they speak the heart of God through edification, exhortation, and comfort. Teachers are those who ground the church as they point out the ways and mind of God revealed through the Word. The list of names given to us, these men were prophets and/or teachers. What a gift not just to the church, but to the world. Hey I know sometimes the world treats you anything but a gift, but Christian you are truly a gift to this fallen world as we (just everyday people) have the words that can direct anybody in any situation (high or low), we have words that can ground and establish them for a fruitful life, and above all – we have the words of life. If the world doesn't notice, oh well, but rest assured God more than knows because literally it is God saying to the world, a specific person, here is a gift personally from me, Jane or Joe, because I love you that much I give them to you to be in your life.

Love the List of Names / Great Attributes – God Lists Them – Real Life Examples

I love the list of names of people in verse 1, for there attributes are all attributes that I desire to have and to be, and I pray that we will soak-in today and say yes, I want to be like these people listed here, for God thought highly enough of them to record them for us, so that we might have real-life example to look unto to shape and mold us into His image.

Son of Consolation / Church needs more Barnabas' / Good Daddy, Mommy / Transformed

Barnabas - Remember Barnabas, the “son of consolation”? He was the one who took Paul under his wing before anyone else in Jerusalem believed Paul was born again. Later on, we'll see Barnabas take John Mark under his wing and walk with him through a season of failure. I don't think a church could ever have enough Barnabas'. Christian, we all need to be encouraged, we all need consolation, for the Christian life in the world we live is hard, it is hard to swim upstream, to go against the flow. How wonderful it is for someone to say, hey keep-on-keeping-on, keep fighting, you are doing so well, you are a good daddy, you are a great mommy, you are a bright light on your campus, in your workplace, how God must smile when he sees looks upon you. How we all need consolation when we fall, when we blow-it, when we make a mess of things. Hey I know you were trying, I know you want to do well, it's ok, get up, let me help dust you off, let me hold you for awhile, let me stay beside you until you're ready to walk under your own strength again. I don't believe that being a Barnabas is a spiritual-gift per se, I believe it is what we become under the spiritual transformation as we are being transformed into Christ's image (for God is Love), we just naturally take on the attribute of Jesus and begin to comfort and encourage people along their walk. I think the “Barnabas” within us is there, we just need to go and look for opportunities to exercise what is within us. Christian, would you be that gift to someone today, an encourager they need in their life.

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV) ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

Probably Simon Cyrene / What a Privilege – Eyes of Jesus / Eyes that Spoke

Simeon who was called Niger - Simon was from present-day Nigeria. This is “probably Simon the Cyrene”, the one who carried the Cross to Golgotha after Jesus sank beneath its weight (Matt 27:32). If I am wrong, then I'm wrong on this verse, for I believe that the Simeon that carried the cross of Christ was changed forever. So out of all the people in the world, this man Simon the Cyrene (from N. Africa) was given the privilege to carry Jesus' cross. If you were there would you not have felt that you were given the greatest honor in the world, to carry His cross? To reflect everyday, wow God chose me to carry His cross, how that would motivate you every day. What else, why do I believe Simon the Cyrene was changed for life, because I believe based on the nature of our Lord, the examples given throughout the Scriptures, that Jesus would never miss the opportunity to use a moment to impact someone's life; and I picture in my mind that as Jesus fall to the ground, as the soldier tapped Simon to carry the cross, that as Simon reached down to

take Jesus cross, Jesus would have turned and with His beaten and bloodied face, He would have looked Simon in the eyes, and Simon would never be the same. Jesus' eyes would be filled with rage, oh these Romans, just wait until Sunday, but His eyes would have been – Simon, Simon, how I long for you, and now here you are. I believe that anyone who will take the time and look into the eyes of Christ will never be the same, for they will see eyes that speak of the depth of love that God has for them, eyes that you could look into and see pain and heartache from the beating and the bleeding while at the same time scream out through the pain “My how I love you, oh what you mean to Me, I can't wait to hold you in My arms”.

Matthew 27:32 (NKJV) ³²Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.

Saved through Simon / I got to carry His Cross – His blood dripped on me / Same for You Lucius of Cyrene - How did Lucius get saved? I suggest to you possibly that Simon the Cross-bearer went back to Cyrene, talked to his buddy Lucius, and together they started walking with the Lord, eventually becoming significant figures in ministry. I got to carry His cross Simon would have told anyone and everyone that would hear back in Cyrene, and he would have told that story with passion. Remember as a side note a few studies ago, when you share Christ, share it with passion, not a black and white theology. Simon wouldn't have told the story, yes you see the crossbeam represents Psalm 22 which was written 450 years before crucifixion was invented, It was the day the Passover Lamb was to be sacrificed, His was bruised and rejected just as Isaiah said He would (all good stuff and true stuff) but Simon would have shared in passion. Simon would have said, I saw the “Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, I saw the Lamb who would take away my sins, and I got to carry His instrument of death, which should have been my instrument of death, His eyes looked deep within mine, His blood on the cross beam dripped down upon my face..... Simon would have shared his story with passion, he would have told it with such zeal (As Spurgeon told his seminary students, catch on fire for Jesus Christ and people will come to watch you burn). Could you have kept silent if you got to carry His cross. Simon may have told his story to Lucius, who said I wish I could have been there, oh to look into His eyes like you did, to have His precious blood drip off that crossbeam unto my face, I believe that one drop of His precious blood is enough to cleanse my sins, past – present –and future. And Simon could have said, I have good news, you can have that same privilege today, you can carry His cross, He gives you the honor to do so – today! And the same is true for anyone that is here today.

Matthew 16:24 (NKJV) ²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*”

A Foster Brother / Herod family rotten to Core / Yet God reached Through

Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch – The Greek indicates that Manaen was a (foster-brother or step-brother) of Herod Antipas—the Herod who cut off John the Baptist's head. As we studied last week, all these Herod's were rotten to the core (killers of children, adulterer, murder, full of pride and envy), but talk about the grace and sovereignty of God! Manaen grew up in Herod's vile, polluted family—yet the Lord rescued him and saved him for ministry. That application is still true today. Hey anyone here have a family that disowned you after you sold-out for Jesus. Maybe at worse they “accidentally” forgot to invite you to the family picnic or grandma's birthday party; well imagine Manaen, knowing the wretchedness of the Herod family, and the hatred they had for Jesus Christ (after all Herod Antipas had already killed John the Baptist) this family may very well have put the death-hit out upon him. But here God lists him, and we have a powerful example of someone has picked up his cross to follow Jesus.

Widow Maker / Blind now Sees – Now opens Eyes of the Blind

and Saul - The widow and orphan maker who once was blind now sees, and he has into the eyes of Jesus, he has seen the Risen Savior, and now God has prepared him to open the eyes of others to see the same thing. As we said, the end of the First half of Acts was Peter's half (Peter's half – as we won't read too much more about Peter), and now the beginning of the second half of Acts (Paul's half as he will be the central figure that points people to Christ). It is interesting to me, because I like stuff like this, but there are some striking similarities between them in this book. What a mighty man, what God will do with “But God”:

- **Both had a first Sermon obviously:** Peter – 2 / Paul - 13
- **Both healed a Lame Man:** Peter - 3 / Paul - 14
- **Both dealt with a Sorcerer:** Peter - Simon, 8 / Paul - Elymas, 13
- **Both exercise the Gift of Healing:** Peter - shadow, 5 / Paul - handkerchief, 19
- **Both Laid Hands on people to receive the Holy Spirit:** Peter - 8 / Paul - 19
- **Both were Worshiped – but rejected it:** Peter - 10 / Paul - 14
- **Both Raised the Dead:** Peter - Tabitha, 9 / Paul - Eutychus, 20
- **Both were Imprisoned Frequently:** Peter – 4, 5, 12 / Paul – 16, 24, 28

James 4:2 / Which Attributes do you Want Today / You want Change – Came Again

As we studied last week, we have not because we ask not (James 4:2); which of these attributes is it that you want today. You came here to be changed, if not you would have slept in, went to breakfast, but rather you chose to come here because you want more of God in your life. Last week wasn't enough, you didn't leave here last week and say "alright that should hold me over for a couple more weeks", now you come here again and again because you believe the Word of God makes a difference in your life as it becomes manifested through the teaching (Titus 1). So which one of these attributes do you want from God, ask, it will be given, hey ask for them all, for every one of them is within His will, for He wants you to be a Barnabas, an encourager and comforter; He wants you to be a Simon of Cyrene, to look into His eyes today and see a new dimension of His love like you had never seen before.

James 4:2 (NKJV) ²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.

Titus 1:3 (NKJV) ³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;

Maybe – Time to pick up Cross / Raised in a Mess of a Home / Done horrible Things

Maybe, you are like Lucius, and realize it is time to deny yourself and pick-up your cross and follow Christ. You've been told about Jesus by someone within your life, and you know it is time, ask! Maybe you are a Manaen here today, and you've been raised in a messed-up home, know that God will still reach down and pull you out and will do great things in your life for His glory – just reach out your hand to take His. And, maybe you are a Saul here today, you've done some things that God could never forgive you of, then be a Saul, receive His forgiveness and go on and live your life.

Names here by Design

These names, here by design, designed just for you and I.

(Acts 13:2 NKJV) As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

(Acts 13:3 NKJV) Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Serving & Being Sent

The heart and theme of this passage is - ministering to the Lord, and we can glean a lot from these first few verses that can make a life change in our very lives today as we look back at these men and what type of men they were, and then what they went out to do, and it all started as they "Ministered to the Lord". Two things I'd like to point out here, one is serving the Lord, and the second is being sent by the Lord.

- **Serving the Lord** - The best way to be sent by the Lord to whatever calling that is, whether it be in serving in Sunday School, serving soup at the Feeding Ministry, or being sent to a mission field (whether locally or international), the best way to be sent is when you are "ministering TO the Lord". Ministering to the Lord by worshipping Him, by adoring Him, by communicating with Him, fasting to set yourself apart from the world, and whatever else you are doing, you are doing it as unto the Lord. Summary – don't be looking for a ministry, be looking for the Lord, and the ministry will follow.

- **Being Sent by the Lord** – God will send out those who are looking for Him. One of the most troubling places in ministry is having to deal with people who are seeking a ministry, rather than seeking the Lord, for if the two are reversed it most always ends in disaster. As a principle, we here at CCAAC are never in a hurry to lay hands on someone, for we feel our laying on of hands, our ordaining, should only be a public confirmation of what God has already declared. As I have joked before, we find giving people a key to the church rather than a title seems to get a whole lot more done in the ministry. Don't go until you have a lifestyle of "ministering to the Lord", for once you are sent, you will only have Him, but if you have Him, you'll have everything you'll need to wherever you are sent.

1 Timothy 5:22 (NKJV) ²²Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

Christian – Enter In – Sweet Fellowship / Be a Simon – Look into Eyes / My 2 yr Old / Me!

Christian, enter into this time of "ministering to the Lord", a time of sweet fellowship with Him, of beholding His face, looking into those eyes of His like Simon the Cyrene did, to kiss His face, to just put your hands on His face and say let me look at You. We can forget that He has feelings, for He does as we are made in His image. It means something to Him when we come into His presence for fellowship, rather than getting something. My 2 year old is go-go-go, and he never settles down; only 3 times in 2 years has he ever fallen asleep on my chest, and I can remember each time vividly. How beautiful it was to me when he just rested on my chest, and I must have given him a thousand kisses as he slept, and I just loved kissing his face. Three times, in two years.....I wondered to myself if I've done more than 3 in two years with my Lord. I'm always on the go, always some push to get something done or be at the next place.

Have to Purpose those Moments / Slow it Down – Turn it Off / Desiring Intimacy

I think we have to purpose those moments, and I think they start the day before where we say I'm slowing down, I'm coming home early, turning the electronic thing off early, going to bed early, with the thought in my mind, I'm waking up early and going to have more than a drive-by prayer time. How often my 2 year is watching his video when I'm desiring intimacy with him. God has many a times said to me, that's a picture of you and Me right there. As you long for intimacy with him, and wait for him, so do I for you. Yesterday we went to the play area at the mall, and Camden was bouncing all over the play stuff, and then he came running over to me and I tackled him, and tickled him, and kissed him, we wrestled and rolled on the floor, and he just laughed and laughed (like 5 kids came and gathered around to watch – they thought it was great too.) Come this Wednesday night and hear Blair and Therese share about their baby Esa's eye cancer, and they'll tell ya, nothing else matters except intimacy with Esa. I think you get the point that I am making, about our Heavenly Father desiring us that same way.

Need Help? – Fast / Pushes down the Flesh – Raises up the Spirit / Resist & Release

Sometimes we need help in this area don't we, we wish there was a principle or model to follow to help get there. Well there is, and it is what these guys were doing, fasting. Fasting pushes the flesh down, and raises the Spirit up. Fasting is resisting the Flesh, and releasing the Spirit.

Fasting Slows us Down – Breaks the Routine

Why? Because fasting slows us down, breaks the routine of life, and it brings you to focus on one thing - the Lord. Every time your stomach growls or you smell food, your mind will go to the fast, which will take you to the Lord.

Fasting detaches from Flesh – Prayer attaches us to God / Prayer releases God Power

Prayer attaches us to God, Fasting detaches us from the flesh. It is a beautiful combination of attaching and detaching. Fasting has to be coupled with prayer. I don't fully understand it, but I believe it by faith; Prayer releases God's great power to change the course of nature, people, and nations.

Flesh says Satisfy – You say No / What did you Say? – Get use to It

Your flesh says satisfy me, but you say No. The Flesh is always give me, give me, give me. And then you say no, the flesh is what? Did I just hear you correctly? Did you say no? Yes, get use to it, the Spirit controls me, not my flesh. Fasting builds a discipline in our lives of not satisfying every physical urge that comes upon us.

How often know we Should be Doing Something

How often do we know we should be doing something, but we just don't have it in us to do it? Yea I really feel the Lord calling me to go serve today at that ministry, or go to that Bible Study, but I just don't like it. You are not alone,

(Matthew 26:40 NKJV) Then He came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, "What? Could you not watch with Me one hour?"

(Matthew 26:41 NKJV) "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Flesh must be put in Submission – Flesh will not take you where the Spirit Can

The flesh must be put in submission for it will not take you to the places God desires you to be, only your Spirit can do that:

They Ministered

So they ministered to the Lord!

[Paul Preaching in Cyprus](#)

(Acts 13:4 NKJV) So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Here important Truth / Sent - Departed

Here is an important truth for you who are trying to discern God's will for your life. Look carefully. The text says, "they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." The Holy Ghost pushed them out, but they departed. The Holy Ghost gave direction, but it was up to them to begin the journey. There comes a point when the Lord, having made His will for you clear to you, expects you to depart—to take the first step on whatever path He has directed you to walk.

Why Cyprus? Where Barnabas From

Why Cyprus? No mention that the Holy Spirit said go to Cyprus, but that is where they go. I suggest to you that they went to Cyprus because that was where Barnabas was from. It's my home country Barnabas may have said, and I care about those people there.

Sometimes told Specifically – Sometimes just a Burden / Delight Thyself / Go with Love

Sometimes the Lord may tell you very specifically to go someplace, other times He may just lead you by the heart that you have for somewhere. Where you go, go with love in your heart, and love the people there, and you'll never have to wonder if you are in the right place, for love is right for every place.

*Psalms 37:4 (NKJV) ⁴ Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*

Great need in Cyprus / Aphrodite – Wife and Daughter / Was right for Love

There was a great need in Cyprus. The worship of Venus, also known as Aphrodite, the love goddess, was centered in Cyprus. Every woman on Cyprus was required to serve as a temple prostitute at least once in her life. And as you read the history of Cyprus, you read of disease, debauchery, and tragedy. Even the appearance of the women as recorded by historians was unbelievably sad. It was a sick island. Imagine at least once in your life your wife and daughter had to go serve there. The world hasn't changed much, many of our young girls giving away their bodies in the name of love. Cyprus was right for love (as our world is today), and Paul and Barnabas come with love. Imagine hearing this gospel, this good news, oh what freedom, you mean there is a God that gives rather than a God that takes. A God that would die for me as compared to a god that violates me. There is nothing that can compare to Christianity, and I wish

Jesus was here right now so I could kiss His face for freeing me, and delivering me. We have the words of life, and thus why we are a gift to this world today just as these men were to Cyprus.

(Acts 13:5 NKJV) And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as their assistant.

(Acts 13:6 NKJV) Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name was Bar-Jesus,

(Acts 13:7 NKJV) who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

Sergius was Governor / Confirmed Archeologically / Bar-Jesus his Medium / Heard 2 Men

So what we have here is Sergius Paulus was governor of Paphos (by the way ancient artifacts (archeological discoveries) confirm his existence, so this is 1 of the 162 historical/archeological facts recorded in the Book of Acts between chapters 13-28). So Sergius had a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus, which means Son of Jesus (or Son of Savior). Sergius Paulus, the Roman-appointed governor of the island, hearing of two men traveling through his island who were sharing the truth of God's love and grace, said, "I want to hear more."

(Acts 13:8 NKJV) But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

Bar- Jesus / Enlightened One / If Governor saved where would he Go

Bar-jesus, also called Elymas, or "Enlightened One," was jealous and worried. After all, if Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor, got saved, where would that leave him? So Elymas started speaking against Barnabas and Paul to Sergius Paulus.

See that Plenty Today / Husbands – Friends / Attack your Church and Friends

The world hasn't changed much, we see plenty of this today, as a husband gets worried that his wife is going to church too much, or as friends don't like that you are not going to those same places with them as you once did, and so they rise up against your new friends, your church family, and start to try to tear them down in order to win you back.

(Acts 13:9 NKJV) Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

Saul Name Changed / Getting smaller & smaller / Degree see Holiness – degree see Love

This is where Saul's name changed to Paul—from "desired/requested one" to "little." God has knocked him off his high-horse, and Saul/Paul all through his life gets smaller and smaller (look at the progression of his life below). The more we see and understand God, the greater he becomes, and the smaller we become. The more I see His holiness, the greater I see my sin, and the greater I see my sin, the greater His love becomes, and I am blown away more today (17 years later) that He would come down and take on my filth and puke, than I was the day I was saved. The more I see of how perfect and holy He is, the more my mind is blown away that He would take on the sins of Ray Bollas, and call me His own. As Paul matured, we see him get smaller and smaller. One of my answers for when people ask how do I know that I am growing and maturing in the Lord, and I tell them when you stop thinking your sin is no big deal, you are entering into Christian maturity; when the little sins, become big sins, you are on your way to Christian maturity, but when a person says their sin is no big deal, they are far-far away. So Christian, how big is your sin today, whatever that sin is?

Paul's Spiritual Progression:

Paul As a Pharisee:

Luke 18:11 (NKJV) *11The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.*

Paul when First Saved

1 Corinthians 15:9 (NKJV) ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul in the Middle of Ministry

Ephesians 3:8 (NKJV) ⁸To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,

Paul at the End of Life

1 Timothy 1:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

(Acts 13:10 NKJV) and said, "O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord?
(Acts 13:11 NKJV) "And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time." And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand.

Exercises Discernment / Facade – Son of Devil

Paul exercises discernment, he sees through the façade of “son of Jesus”, to who this man truly was as he calls him “son of the devil”.

Paul exercises – Be Angry not Sin / Still leaves opening to Repent / Paul had 2nd Chance

Then Paul exercises some “be angry and do not sin”, as he lays it out there on Bar-Jesus, but still leaves him a place to repent by not blinding him for life. Paul got a second chance, and he gives Bar-Jesus the opportunity also, literally the exact same way Paul came to understanding, by letting him sit in darkness and think about what you really believe, and why.

Ephesians 4:26-27 (NKJV) ²⁶“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, ²⁷nor give place to the devil.

Times we need to Bow-Up to Protect / When ready to Talk - Call

Absolutely there are times we need to bow-up, rise-up against someone who is try to hurt one of our own, take them away from the Lord, and we need to deal directly and very clearly (hey, you are not welcomed around here); but when you are ready to talk about Christ with us, call us and we will meet with you.

(Acts 13:12 NKJV) Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

Sergius not astonished by Miracle – But the Word / You mean God Loves Me

It interests me that Luke didn't say Sergius Paulus was astonished at the miracle that took place. No, Luke said he was astonished at the doctrine of the Lord. Hey that is too bad about Bar-Jesus, but “You mean God loves me?” Sergius Paulus must have wondered in amazement. “You mean He became a Man and died in my place? You mean I can be forgiven and saved—made right and redeemed?”

May never become Accustomed to story of Cross / Lord keep us Astonished

May we as believers never become so accustomed to hearing the story of the Cross that we become hardened. The wonder of it all! Amazing grace! O, Lord, keep us astonished.

And they ministered to the Lord

Paul's First Sermon (part 1)

Acts 13:13-23

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Gospel to ends of Earth / Still Going Today – Exciting times we Live / Only other Time

The gospel is going to the ends of the earth now as we have entered the last major section of the Book of Acts, witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth. And although the gospel will reach the end of the earth geographically, it is still going today as it will go "until" the End of the Earth and what exciting times we live in today as we see the signs

- coming to pass in some cases (such as the rebirth of Israel in 1948),
- and coming together (as we see the emergence of the union between Iran and Russia, the Revived Roman Empire being reassembled, a global economy, a world desperately looking for a World Leader who can fix the world's mess).

To me, the only time I would have wanted to live in other than today, would be 2000 years, the days of the gospel and Acts.

Mission Team – On Move – Set Sail / Left off Governor Saved

So the mission team of Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, John Mark, and Saul are on the move, they have "set sail" (I love that phrase – as we should always be on the move), and they and the gospel are on the move to the ends of the earth, and exciting times it will be as we read in the chapters to come, and so too it will be for everyone who sets sail with Jesus to wherever He wants to take them. They just led the governor of the Island of Paphos to the Lord, and now are on the move to Perga. Let's pick it up in verse 13.

Paul Preaching in Pisidia

(Acts 13:13 NKJV) **Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.**

Modern Day Turkey

Verse 13 - they came to Perga in Pamphylia – See the Map, this is modern day Turkey.

Now Paul in Charge

Verse 13 - Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos - Now before, it had been, "Barnabas and Saul" (13:2). Now it's "Paul and his company." This means that, although Paul was originally following Barnabas, at this point Paul was thrust into the forefront.

Acts 13:2 (NKJV) ²*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."*

Another reason to love Barnabas – Kingdom Builder / No Biz Card / I'd step Aside

Here is one more reason to appreciate Barnabas, truly an unsung (under-recognized figure) in the New Testament. We have seen him as the great comforter and encourager, and on top of that we now see him as one who only cares about building God's Kingdom, and not his own. Barnabas recognizes that God has placed a special anointing upon Paul, and Barnabas steps back, so Paul can step-up. Barnabas isn't threatened, he isn't egotistical – desiring to be

recognized as the leader, for Barnabas just wants to see the Kingdom grow and doesn't care whose name is on the business card. There is just too much ego in the ministry, people wanting to be recognized, and it limits what God wants to do. I love being pastor of this church, but I can tell you, if God brought another man to take this church deeper and farther, I'd step aside in a heartbeat because my number one desire in my heart is what is best for you.

Be Kingdom Builders / We as a Church seek Kingdom Building

For any of you men here today that see your future as going out and planting and Pastor a church, in every form of ministry that you do, do it for the growth of the Kingdom, and don't worry if it will grow your church. We as a church do many things that will not grow this church, but is specifically for the growth of the kingdom; our ministry in Curtis Bay, our web based ministries such as YouTube and GodTube, and the orphanage in Kenya; our tithing and support of the works in Nicaragua, India, and Africa. Our "mailers" are targeted for evangelism, not church growth. I could have taken one of our funny, uplifting, and encouraging messages and used that as our mailer, but our targeted audience is the unsaved, and deliver to them an evangelistic message so that they might hear and respond to the gospel.

Commend You / We Study the Bible / Emergent Church (light on heavy – heavy on light)

I commend each of you here today, for we differ very much from other churches in that we have a Bible Study on Sunday morning, not a Sermon. We go verse-by-verse, no matter how dry, no matter how challenging those passages are to our comfort zone. Now, if on Sunday we randomly selected topics, and told more stories and more jokes, and everyone left here feeling really good, I have a feeling we would need a new building. But you come, you study, you grow, and the Kingdom of God in you grows. Sadly there have been many churches that are going the "Seeker Friendly/Emergent Church" way, which is light on the heavy stuff, and heavy on the light stuff, for they want people to feel good and come back next week – it is just what Paul tells Timothy, and it is what I want to tell every teacher in this room, whether you are going out to plant a church, or teach Sunday School with in this church – teach the Word!

1 Thessalonians 2:12 (KJV) ¹²*That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.*

2 Timothy 4:1-5 (NKJV) ¹*I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom:* ²*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.* ³*For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers;* ⁴*and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.* ⁵*But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

Paul in Lead – about 14 yrs / God never in Hurry / Wait Actively

So Paul is in the lead now we will see for the rest of our studies and I think it important to note that it is some 14 years since Paul's conversion, and 20 years since the command of God – "Go therefore" and the gospel is just now having free course unto the Gentiles. God is never in a hurry except to run to a prodigal son. So again, you need not be in a hurry yourself (except to run to a prodigal, and let us all be quick to restore and love that fallen brother or sister), but don't feel it necessarily to rush out and do this or do that for the Lord, just wait on His timing, and go when He says to go. But may I also say, wait actively, while God has you in a waiting mode be like Paul and be equipping and grounding yourself for when the time comes to go.

Luke 15:20 (NKJV) ²⁰*And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.*

Mark Nephew / Author of Mark / Barnabas' Timothy

Verse 13 - and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem – This is John Mark. John Mark was a nephew of Barnabas (Col 4). He was a young man, a young boy, actually, during the public ministry of Jesus (Mark 14). Thought to be around twelve years old at the time of the crucifixion, John Mark gives to us an interesting insight concerning when Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane. How that they grabbed a young boy there in the garden, who wriggled free and fled from the garden, and it is believed that John is giving there a personal testimony of what happened to him. So he is the author of the Book of Mark that is titled the gospel according to Mark. Mark was too young to really be a full eyewitness to these accounts.

Mark was to Peter, probably what Timothy was to Paul. And Mark spent most of his time with Peter, listening to Peter tell the stories of Jesus. And so through Mark, you actually have Peter's account. But it is given to us by Mark who listened to Peter as he would rehearse these stories. **Colossians 4:10 (KJV)** ¹⁰*Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)*

Mark 14:50-52 (KJV) ⁵⁰*And they all forsook him, and fled. ⁵¹And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him: ⁵²And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.*

Left on 1st Journey / Much Speculation Why

He went with Paul and Barnabas on the first missionary journey. However, he left them and did not continue the first journey with them. There is much speculation of why John Mark returned home, some think maybe he got sick because history books tell us that Perga had a extremely high rate of malaria; some think he was home sick for his mother, but I calculate he is like 32 at this time, so I doubt that; some think he didn't like the change in leadership from uncle Barnabas to the strong personality of Paul; some think he just couldn't take the persecution that kept coming their way (I could relate to that, to be honest, I want revival, but I don't want pain. I want everyone to like me, I don't like it when people sneer at me because I share Christ, or won't be like them and stand for Christ. I want to see people saved but get uncomfortable thinking it may cause me to be uncomfortable – take away the gods of America (an economic collapse) and many people will finally be able to see clearly and turn to Christ, but I get uncomfortable thinking what it would be like to experience the Great Depression; whatever the case, it appears that his leaving wasn't for reasons that Paul agreed with, and Paul refused him to join them in a future mission trip. We will ask John Mark when we see him in heaven; it will be interesting to know why, but let you say that you heard it here first, I'm putting my money on that it was because of a – woman!

Acts 15:36-40 (NKJV) ³⁶*Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing." ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.*

On 2nd Journey – Paul refused him / There is Room for Disagreement in the Body / 2 Tim 4

So when Paul and Barnabas were ready to head out on the second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to take his nephew Mark again, but Paul objected and there came a dispute between Paul and Barnabas over the issue of taking Mark and so the dispute was so great that they decided to part company. Paul would take Silas and go out and Barnabas would take Mark and go out. And thus, there were two missionary teams instead of one. There is room for disagreement within the body of Christ and God oftentimes uses such things to expand His work, as He did there in the case of Paul and Barnabas, creating two missionary teams instead of one, doubling the foreign effort. But those disputes or differences that arise should never remain. We will see that for when Paul was in Rome, Mark was with him and ministered to him. And later in writing to Timothy, Paul requested that Mark come for he was, Paul said, of great comfort to me. Let our differences never remain.

2 Timothy 4:11 (KJV) ¹¹*Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

God gives 2nd Chances / Barnabas gives 2nd Chance / Only you can put self on Shelf

What an example we see in Barnabas, he was always the encourager, always looking to lift people up, and thus the meaning of his name "son of consolation", as I said last week – a church can never have enough Barnabas'. Secondly, what an example we see in John Mark, and that is that God gives second chances (third, fourth's, and four hundreds). So no matter what failings we may have had, God is never done with us, will never write us off, and put us on a shelf. Only you can put yourself on the shelf because you won't get back up and get back into what He is doing. The Bible is full of failures who God restored and used again in a mighty way. This room is full of failures God has restored, and this pulpit speaks a modern-day John Mark story. By God using the failures, He only magnifies Himself more by doing such things:

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NKJV) ²⁶For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The Concert

I'm reminded of a fitting story (urban legend more than the truth I'm sure, although the author himself never denied it) - When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that her child was missing Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway piano on the stage. To her horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.' At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano, and whispered in the boy's ear, 'Don't quit . . keep playing.' Then, leaning over , Paderewski reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child, and he added a running obbligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed what could have been a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was so mesmerized that they couldn't recall what else the great master played. Only the classic, ' Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.'

Perhaps that's the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't always graceful flowing music. However, with the hand of the Master, our life's work can truly be beautiful. The next time you set out to accomplish great feats and ended up failing, listen carefully... you will hear the voice of The Master, whispering in your ear, 'Don't quit . . Keep playing.' May you feel His arms around you and know that His hands are there, helping you turn your feeble attempts into true masterpieces. Remember, God doesn't seem to call the equipped, rather, He equips the 'called'..... and remember....'Don't quit . . Keep playing!

(Acts 13:14 NKJV) But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.

(Acts 13:15 NKJV) And after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Men and brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."

(Acts 13:16 NKJV) Then Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

Not same Antioch

This was not the same Antioch from which Paul and Barnabas sailed. There were seven cities named Antioch in this region during this time. The Antioch in this verse was located northeast of Perga, the city in present-day Turkey from which John Mark left.

Both Jew and Gentiles are Here

Both Jews and Gentiles are assembled here, the Gentiles would be "and you who fear God":

(Acts 13:42 NKJV) So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

Customary / Paul's Sweeping Hand – this is for you- Not a story

It was customary of the day for the leaders of the synagogue to invite others to speak who it was recognized had a word to share. I like the word picture here, as I can picture Paul sweeping his hand over all the people present, this news is for you, this news isn't about someone, it isn't for some, it isn't for one, it is for every person sitting here today – it is for you, it is personal, get up to the edge of your seat and listen to this – and you will be blown away. Same for you today, no matter how many times you've heard the story, get up on the edge of your seat and God will speak, and blow you away.

Paul gives Overview of History – Paints the Canvas Black

So Paul will give an overview of the history of Israel, and like a master artist, he will paint the background canvas of his masterpiece black before he applies the brilliant colors.

Paul overview Jewish History

Paul is going to give a review of Jewish history just like Stephen did that day that he was stoned.

- [Israel's Slavery in Egypt \(13:17\)](#)
- [Israel's Wilderness Wandering \(13:18-19\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Judges \(13:20\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Kings \(13:21-23\)](#)

[Israel's Slavery in Egypt \(13:17\)](#)

(Acts 13:17 NKJV) "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers, and exalted the people when they dwelt as strangers in the land of Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He brought them out of it.

How many Bricks – 10' thick – 15' high / That's a lot of Black Paint

Paul began his sermon by reminding the Jews of their history—reminding them of their ancestors who were held captive in Egypt, baking bricks under the burning sun. How many bricks did they bake? Using only the bricks from the pyramids, sphinxes, and monuments that remain today, a person could build a wall ten feet thick and fifteen feet high that would stretch from Los Angeles, CA, to Brooklyn, New York. That's a lot of bricks! That's a lot of black paint on the canvas of history of the nation of Israel.

[Israel's Wilderness Wandering \(13:18-19\)](#)

(Acts 13:18 NKJV) "Now for a time of about forty years He put up with their ways in the wilderness.

(Acts 13:19 NKJV) "And when He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land to them by allotment.

OKJV / Feed and Put up with / Word in there for Me

Verse 18 - He put up with their ways - The phrase in the OKJV “suffered their manners” is a unique Hebrew idiom that can either mean “to feed” or “to put up with.” So which is it? When Scripture says God “suffered their manners,” was He putting up with the Israelites, or feeding them? He was doing both. God both hung in there with the children of Israel and provided for them for forty years. Hmmmm, I think there is a word in there for me.

Acts 13:18 (KJV) ¹⁸And about the time of forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness.

Joshua in 1 Verse

Verse 19 is the 24 chapters of Joshua condensed to one verse; now that is good preaching.

[Israel's Era of Judges \(13:20\)](#)

(Acts 13:20 NKJV) "After that He gave them judges for about four hundred and fifty years, until Samuel the prophet.

Samuel ushered the Kings in – Israel rejection of God

Before Israel had Kings, they had Judges, with Samuel being one of the greatest; Samuel ushered in the kings of Israel even though it was regrettable as God said their desire for a king was a rejection of Him. People still today want a king over God, thinking the king can govern a nation better than God:

*1 Samuel 8:4-9 (NKJV) ⁴Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, ⁵and said to him, "Look, you are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations."
⁶But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." So Samuel prayed to the LORD. ⁷And the LORD said to Samuel, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. ⁸According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day—with which they have forsaken Me and served other gods—so they are*

doing to you also. ⁹Now therefore, heed their voice. However, you shall solemnly forewarn them, and show them the behavior of the king who will reign over them.”

David Hero of Israel

Of all the kings of Israel though, there was never one like King David. Samuel anointed King David who was the hero of all of Israel's Kings, and for this sermon – a key figure for it is through him that the Messiah would come.

Can't say it All – 450yrs in 1 verse

Paul, gives 450 years of history in one verse just like he did the Book of Joshua in one verse. Good lesson as a Bible teacher, don't feel you have to explain every detail, but make sure you give enough details to paint the backdrop of your canvas, and the theme you are trying to bring home to the hearer.

Israel's Era of Kings (13:21-23)

(Acts 13:21 NKJV) "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

(Acts 13:22 NKJV) "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

(Acts 13:23 NKJV) "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior; Jesus;

1st Sermon – Mirrors Stephen's / I blew-it No one Listening / Isaiah 55 / Keep Playing

Here is Paul's first recorded sermon—remarkable in its similarity to Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. As Stephen was going down, had he glanced in the direction of Paul, who was holding the garments of those throwing stones, no doubt he would have thought, I failed. These people aren't receiving or responding to my message. But because the Word of God will not return void (Isaiah 55:11), Stephen's words rattled around inside Paul, and fourteen years later, out of Paul's mouth came a replay of Stephen's sermon. This gives me great hope because, although sometimes when I share with people and feel that no one is listening, that none are responding, the Word of God is living and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Paul goes from widow and orphan maker, to Gospel taker, and to the ends of the earth it has gone. Beloved, just “keep playing.”

Isaiah 55:11 (KJV) ¹¹So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

God sets and removes Kings / News of Herod eaten by Worms

Verse 22 - And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king – Paul bringing the point that God sets up kings and removes kings according to His purposes. No doubt the news of Herod being eaten by worms after allowing the masses to call him god had reached this town.

If Still need convincing of God of Second Chances

Verse 22 - 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will

- If you still aren't convinced that God is a God of second chances after we have considered John Mark, Paul, then the Lord gives us one more in this chapter with King David. Adultery and murder as we know of David, yet we see God's word ring true as He say, “to their sin and lawless I will not remember no more”, amazingly all God remembers of David is “a man after My own heart.”. Read the life history of David and you will see the only thing David could do to receive his forgiveness was to confess and repent, there was no mighty works that he did that God received from him.

Hebrews 10:17 (KJV) ¹⁷And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

Psalms 103:12 (NKJV) ¹² As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

How Interesting – History reflects Heart of Man / God raised up Deliverer – Break Cycle

How interesting it is to me how much the history of Israel reflects the history of all men everywhere. (Egypt) - Living in bondage to the cruel taskmaster of sin and the devil, and the continually longing to be free but somehow the chains always pull us back in, (the Wilderness) – the wandering and drifting trying to figure out what is the purpose of life, (the Judges) the looking to a life coach, someone or some book, that can lead me and guide me with words of wisdom for today, and (the Kings) – oh to have a great leader, one person I can pin my hope and trust in to lead me through this life, whether that be a President, religious figure, or a spouse, just someone to make all the right decisions to make my life fruitful and complete. Freedom from one, just seems to lead to another, and the cycle just continues on and on. But God has raised up a deliverer for all mankind, a Savior, a Deliverer who can break the cycle, who can deliver us from the chains that bind us, give purpose to life, give the Words of Life, and be that One that becomes all things to us – the Savior Jesus Christ.

- [Israel's Slavery in Egypt \(13:17\)](#)
- [Israel's Wilderness Wandering \(13:18-19\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Judges \(13:20\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Kings \(13:21-23\)](#)

Canvas is Black – Time for Brilliant Colors

The canvas has been painted a dark black, and now it is time to put the brilliant colors of life unto the canvas. Red, blood red that is; yellow, the brilliance of the Sun on resurrection Sunday; and blue, the heavenly colors surrounding the throne of God where the Son of Man is seated at the right hand of the Father. We will start here next study.

Paul's First Sermon (part 2)

Acts 13:24-42

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Finishing Part 2 / Master Artist – Black Paint / History – saviors could never Save

We are finishing our study of Paul's first Sermon. Like a master artist, he paints the background of the canvas a deep and dark black as he overviewed the history of Israel (our last study). From 400 years of slavery in Egypt, to 40 years of wilderness wanderings, then their periods of judges and kings; throughout their entire history Israel was always looking for a better tomorrow. If we could just get out of this slavery things would be great, and so out of slavery they go right into 40 years of wilderness wandering, not having enough faith to take the Promised Land. God gives them judges once in the Promised Land, but that wasn't good enough as they cry out for a king. Well the kings couldn't fulfill their wants and needs, and that is obvious from Babylonian captivity to these listeners current Roman occupation. Paul paints the picture black for them in that all their "saviors" never could save, at least not for long; from Moses, to Joshua, to Samson and Samuel, to King Saul, David, to Herod, all could not save and deliver.

Paul Overviews the History of Israel:

- [Israel's Slavery in Egypt \(13:17\)](#)
- [Israel's Wilderness Wandering \(13:18-19\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Judges \(13:20\)](#)
- [Israel's Era of Kings \(13:21-23\)](#)

All Israel's History – Leading to 1 Point – the Promised Messiah

All of Israel's history was leading up to one point, the Promised Messiah. From the promise given in Genesis 3, to Isaiah 9, Isaiah 53, and the many others, all of this history was leading up to one point, the coming of the Promised Messiah.

Genesis 3:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵ *And I will put enmity*

*Between you and the woman,
And between your seed and her Seed;
He shall bruise your head,
And you shall bruise His heel."*

(Isaiah 9:6 NKJV) *For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

(Isaiah 9:7 NKJV) *Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵ *But He was wounded for our transgressions,*

*He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.*

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

History Israel – History of Human Heart

As we had closed with last study, how much the history of Israel is the history of the human heart. Men and woman enslaved and in bondage to sin, desiring to break free but so often the chains are too thick to break on their own, and the self-made brick walls are too high to climb. Men and woman wandering the wilderness of life aimlessly wondering what is the purpose of life, why am I here. People hoping a life coach (aka the wisdom of the judges), or just give us a leader who can lead and guide and make everything ok, but each leader and life coach comes up short, leaving the person asking who can deliver me, who can lead me.

The Canvas is Dark Black – now for the Brilliant Colors (Red – White – Yellow – Blue)

The canvas is a deep black, for the Nation of Israel, and for man today, and now Paul will now start putting on the brilliant colors of red, white, yellow, and blue. Blood red, the blood of Jesus, pure white, a white as the driven snow – forgiveness, a yellow as brilliant as the Sun was on that resurrection Sunday, and a sky-blue of the heavens where Jesus is seated and making intercession for us.

Let's pick it up in verse 21 for context:

John the Baptist preaches Christ

(Acts 13:21 NKJV) "And afterward they asked for a king; so God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

(Acts 13:22 NKJV) "And when He had removed him, He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will.'

(Acts 13:23 NKJV) "From this man's seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior; Jesus;

(Acts 13:24 NKJV) "after John had first preached, before His coming, the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

(Acts 13:25 NKJV) "And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'Who do you think I am? I am not He. But behold, there comes One after me, the sandals of whose feet I am not worthy to loose.'

(Acts 13:26 NKJV) "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent.

Gospel without Repentance – Not the Gospel / Modern Evangelism

Verse 24 - the baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel – Paul preaches a repentance based Gospel, just as Peter did, just as Jesus did. The gospel that is preached without repentance is not the gospel, regardless how many books you sell and how many television appearance you get. Without repentance there is no forgiveness of sin (Acts 3:19). Modern evangelism wants to soft-peddle the gospel because they are afraid to offend the people. Woe to anyone who does not tell the person they must repent of their sin.

(Acts 3:19 NKJV) "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

Don't Miss that Phrase – Finished the Course

Verse 25 - "And as John was finishing his course – Oh don't miss out on that phrase, "as John was finishing his course". John stayed faithful to the course God had set for him, and may we do the same. • Christian, here's a good phrase to tack on the refrigerator, or prayer journal.

Christian be like John, finish strong, finish courageously:

- Couples stay in the marriage
- Singles stay pure.
- Men don't point and click
- Youth, keep going against the flow, I know it is hard.
- Stay faithful, even if you aren't seeing the fruits of your labors presently and experientially.

How stay Course / Keep looking at All Jesus has Done / Not Blind Faith / Catalog

How did John the Baptist stay the course (in the midst of imprisonment, isolation, and extreme persecution), he asked if Jesus was the One? And Jesus answer was good enough, was all that he needed. Jesus said just see what I'm doing, and what I have done, and for John that was enough for him to finish the course despite the trial and suffering he was currently enduring – because what Jesus had and was doing was proof enough to finish the course. Jesus didn't ask for blind faith, and nor does He ask it of you; God gives plenty of proof by what He has done and what He is presently doing. Christian it is good to go back and review and catalog all that Jesus has done, and is currently doing (in your life and the lives of others), and we like John with eyes fixed upon Jesus will finish the course, and finish strong. We don't need books or seminars (as enjoyable as they may be), we only need to keep ourselves locked and loaded unto Jesus Christ. **Matthew 11:2-6 (NKJV)** ²And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples ³and said to Him, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" ⁴Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: ⁵The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. ⁶And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

Israel's puts Jesus to Death

(Acts 13:27 NKJV) "For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him.

(Acts 13:28 NKJV) "And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death.

(Acts 13:29 NKJV) "Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb.

No doubt Listeners who came Regular to Synagogue

Verse 27 - because they did not know Him, nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath – No doubt these listeners came every Saturday too, and Paul brilliantly interweaves in this message the error of the forefathers could very well be repeating itself right there in that room. Today it is still applicable, lots of Sunday church attendees totally missing the Savior and all the Scriptures that speak of Him.

Paul referencing OT Prophecies / Crucifixion 750yrs

Verse 29 - Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him – Paul making reference to all the prophetic Scriptures that Jesus fulfilled, most notably crucifixion (hung on a tree) that was prophesied in Psalm 22, which was 750 years before the Romans even invented crucifixion.

Psalms 22:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They pierced My hands and My feet;

Numbers 21:9 (NKJV) ⁹So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

Deuteronomy 21:22-23 (NKJV) ²²"If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God.

Note on Deuteronomy 21 - The guilty person was not hanged by the neck; this form of execution was not practiced in ancient Israel. The hanging was actually an impaling of the corpse for public viewing after death by stoning. Everyone would know that individual had brought guilt on the community. The exposure of the corpse was limited to one day. For that day, it reminded people of God's judgment on the sinner.

Why Jews not Stone Jesus like Stephen and Paul / Had to fulfill Prophecy

Have you ever considered this, why did the Jews demand of Pilate that Jesus be slain? They themselves stoned Stephen in Acts 7. They'll stone Paul in Acts 14. Why didn't they stone Jesus? Because the prophecies of the Old Testament all pointed toward crucifixion. The serpent on the pole in Numbers 21, the law that declared "Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree" (see Deuteronomy 21:23), and Psalm 22 all portray crucifixion. Therefore, moved by forces they didn't

even understand, the Jewish leaders appealed to a Roman Pilate so that Christ would die a Roman death—exactly as prophesied.

Jesus raises from the Dead

(Acts 13:30 NKJV) "But God raised Him from the dead.

(Acts 13:31 NKJV) "He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are His witnesses to the people.

Don't just take my Word / 500 / 7-11 Hold-up

Paul said, "Don't take my word for it. A whole bunch of guys saw Him." Later on in 1 Corinthians, he'll say "Five hundred men saw Him, talked to Him, and give witness that He rose from the dead." Five hundred witnesses is a formidable group. Suppose there was a holdup at a 7–11 store near your house. Curious about it, you sit in the courtroom observing the trial, listening carefully as the first witness takes the stand and says, "I was in 7–11 on June 24, getting a Big Gulp, and this guy with black hair, a handlebar mustache, and a scar down his left cheek walked in, pulled out a pistol, and said, "Hit the ground! This is a stickup!" So I hit the ground along with everyone else. He took the money, fired a shot, ran out the door, and jumped in his car, a blue Corvair." And then a second witness took the stand, saying, "On June 24, I was in 7–11 buying a Slurpee. A guy came in with a scar down his left cheek and a black handlebar mustache. He pulled out a pistol and told us to hit the ground. Then he took the money, fired a shot, and took off in a blue Corvair." And a third witness said, "I was in 7–11 buying a Reese's Peanut Butter Cup and this guy—I'll never forget him as long as I live—with a scar and a handlebar mustache came in holding a gun and told us to hit the deck. He fired a shot and drove away in a blue Corvair." And as you listened, a fourth witness, a fifth, an eighth, a tenth, a two hundredth, a three hundredth, a four hundredth, and then finally five hundredth witnesses came in and told the very same story. Since our system of jurisprudence is based upon eyewitness evidence, the accused would be convicted of robbery if five hundred witnesses gave corroborating evidence.

1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. ⁶After that He was seen **by over five hundred brethren at once**, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. ⁷After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. ⁸Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

All kinds of Excuses – try nullify the Eyewitnesses / None say "NO" Eyewitness

Paul appealed to this reasoning when he said, "Five hundred men saw Him." It is interesting to me that Paul's contemporaries, who were trying to disprove the Resurrection, gave all sorts of explanations—ranging from mass hypnosis to mass delusion—in an attempt to nullify the eyewitness accounts of those who saw the resurrected Jesus. But none of them—not one of the unbelieving historians of that day—said, "There are no eyewitnesses. Paul's making that up." The fact that there were eyewitnesses was as irrefutable as the empty tomb. If I weren't a believer simply because of what Jesus has done for me personally, I would be a believer because of the overwhelming proof intellectually. Anyone who looks at the evidence historically must factor in the eyewitnesses—men who chose to die brutal and violent deaths rather than deny they had seen the resurrected Christ.

(Acts 13:32 NKJV) "And we declare to you glad tidings; that promise which was made to the fathers.

(Acts 13:33 NKJV) "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.'

(Acts 13:34 NKJV) "And that He raised Him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, He has spoken thus: 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.'

(Acts 13:35 NKJV) "Therefore He also says in another Psalm: 'You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption.'

(Acts 13:36 NKJV) "For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption;

(Acts 13:37 NKJV) "but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.

Corruption in regards to Decomposition of Body

The corruption spoken of here is in regard to the decomposition of a dead body.

Promise given to David – not Apply to David

This promise, although given to David, does not apply to him, for he would indeed see corruption as his body decayed in the coffin. To whom, then, does the promise apply? It applies to the Son of David—Jesus Christ.

Thank God – for the But God / Substitution Accepted

Verse 30 - "But God raised Him from the dead &

Verse 37 - but He whom God raised up saw no corruption. – Thank God for the “But God” in the Bible, they are the difference between eternal life and eternal death for us. The resurrection is the power of the Gospel, for anyone can die, that is the easy part, but resurrection, that is the defining part. God defined forgiveness (granted), new life (given), and eternal life (guaranteed) through the resurrection. Had Jesus remained in the tomb, we would have no confidence that the gospel meant anything, and would sit here today saying “maybe, can’t be sure”, but through the resurrection we have full assurance that God the Father accepted the substitution of sin, as Jesus traded places with us, and by Jesus raising from the dead, that is proof that we too we raise from our physical death. God isn’t asking for blind faith, but has given us proof-positive. Here is an overview of what all was included in Jesus trading places with you:

Trading Places

By Jesus the Christ

Jesus Took Your Place

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)⁵ *But He was wounded for our transgressions,*

He was bruised for our iniquities;

The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,

And by His stripes we are healed.

⁶ *All we like sheep have gone astray;*

We have turned, every one, to his own way;

And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Jesus Became What You Were (sinners)

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV)²¹ *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

You Were Crucified With Christ

Galatians 2:20 (NKJV)²⁰ *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Jesus Became What You Were (forsaken of God)

Matthew 27:46 (NKJV)⁴⁶ *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

You Died With Christ

Romans 6:8 (NKJV)⁸ *Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,*

You Were Buried With Christ

Romans 6:4 (NKJV)⁴ *Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

You Were Raised With Christ

Colossians 3:1 (NKJV)¹ *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.*

You Were Made Alive With Christ

Colossians 2:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

You Are In Christ

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

You Inherited With Christ

Romans 8:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

You Conquered With Christ

Romans 8:37 (NKJV) ³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

You Are Seated With Christ

Ephesians 2:6 (NKJV) ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

The Ultimate Trading Places / Sons of God / Washing and Regeneration

The ultimate trading places as the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus the Christ, traded places with us in sin and death, so that we may become sons of God before the Father in heaven through the washing and regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

Galatians 4:4-7 (NKJV) ⁴But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Titus 3:4-7 (NKJV) ⁴But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, ⁵not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Today Begotten You / Best commentary on Bible / The Cults

Verse 33 - "God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.' – In reference to this passage, important to see and understand it for the cults have totally confused it, and if you mess up what "begotten" means, than what we just went over means nothing about the "Trading Places" for if Jesus is anything less than God, than Him trading places with us is just a nice story, but if/since He is God, Him trading places with us is mind-blowing, that the Holy God would leave His throne to come and take the vile puke of man's sin, beaten and tortured, so that He may pay our penalty for sin, that is mind blowing. The best commentary for the Bible is the Bible. Let the Bible interpret the Bible. God will never contradict Himself, therefore, the Bible, His Word will never contradict itself. This passage here in verse 33 is a quote from Psalm 2:7 and Paul the Apostle interprets it for us here in Acts 13. Paul explains it to us here in Acts to mean that God is talking about the resurrection; Jesus is the first (the Greek word is "gennaō", and it means to "bring forth", as Jesus is the leader of the resurrection. This isn't talking birthing in this verse, but delivery. This is a verse that the Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons use a great deal. I wish they would listen long enough to find out what it means. It would help them a great deal to find it has no reference to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ—which they would see if only they would turn to the New Testament and let the Spirit of God interpret. The reference in the second psalm is not to the birth of Jesus but the resurrection of Jesus. He never was begotten in the sense of having a beginning. Rather, this is in reference to His resurrection being the first of many. Christ was begotten out of the tomb. Jesus is the eternal Son of God, and God is the eternal Father. You cannot have an eternal Father without having an eternal Son. They were this throughout eternity. This is their position in the Trinity. It hasn't anything to do with someone being born, but it does have something to do with someone being begotten from the dead. It has to do with resurrection. I'm afraid the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormon's have not heard this, but they could find, with a

little honest searching, that the New Testament makes it very clear Jesus Christ is not a creature. He is the eternal Person of the Trinity. He is the God-man. Psalm 2:7 sustains this doctrine

Psalms 2:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷ "I will declare the decree:

The LORD has said to Me,

'You are My Son,

Today I have begotten You.

⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You

The nations for Your inheritance,

And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron;

You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."

John 3:16

How about John 3:16 you may ask, the Greek word used there is "monogenes", and as you follow it through to its root, (it means one and only, and unique, one of a kind), and that truly is what Jesus is, one of a kind. The Mormon's by the way totally contradict themselves in that they say Jesus was created by God and therefore He is not God, and they use these references to prove their point. Well we see that Psalm 2 is speaking of the resurrection, and the contradiction in John 3:16 in the Greek is that Jesus is one and only, but the Mormons say Jesus and Lucifer are brothers. So they contradict themselves by trying to use John 3:16 saying Jesus was created because that word would disallow God to have another son, aka – Lucifer.

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

The Jews changed their Teaching on Psalm 2

It is interesting that up until the eleventh century, all of the Jewish commentators saw this as a prophecy of the Messiah. But when they saw how it so completely fit Jesus Christ in the eleventh century the Jewish commentators changed and said "No, this wasn't a prophecy concerning Jesus Christ." But up until the eleventh century, every commentary recognized this as a prophecy of Jesus Christ. But they decided that the Messiah was not the Son of God. And they began to declare their rejection of the claim of Jesus Christ as being the Messiah because He also claimed to be the Son of God, and they had come to the decision that the Messiah was not the Son of God. And to the present day they will declare to you the basic reason why they reject the Messiahship of Jesus is his claim to be the Son of God. And yet, what was the decree? "Thou art my Son. This day have I begotten thee." The only begotten Son of God. Of course, in Isaiah the prophecy also said "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."

Paul preaches Forgiveness of Sin through Jesus Christ

(Acts 13:38 NKJV) "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

(Acts 13:39 NKJV) "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

All means All

You are justified from all things. The word "all" in Greek means "all"!

Man's Greatest Need – God's Greatest Deed

Man's greatest need is God's greatest deed. The greatest need for your sixteen-year-old son at home, or your thirty-eight-year-old husband sitting beside you, the greatest need for every person is the same: forgiveness. And we have the privilege of telling people, even as Paul told his audience, "Through this Man is the forgiveness of sin."

Justified – a Legal Law Term / 1 of 2 Standings (guilty or not guilty) / Breaking the Law

Verse 39 - and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. - Justified simply means, just-if-I-had-not-sinned. The term

justification is a generic legal term which refers to one's standing before a law. Those who are subject to the law can have one of two standings before the law—guilty or innocent (no maybes). For those who are determined to be guilty of transgressing the law (in this case the Law of Moses

– the 10 Commandments) there is typically some remedy in the law for justification. Justification is therefore defined as changing one's status from guilty to not guilty.

No Double Jeopardy – Can't be Retried / It is a Constitution Law

Here is the beautiful part Christian, there is no double-jeopardy (a constitutional right - that forbids that a defendant be tried twice for the same crime on the same set of facts), we cannot be tried for the same crime again. Oh glory to the King of kings!. Not only is that it is now our constitution law that we can't be retried because we are now under the Constitution of Heaven!

Slave in Africa

A man from Africa tells this story - the story was about a man — a strapping, strong slave. He was sold in this country many years ago on an auction block and the auctioneer introduced him as a "strong, capable young man and you would be able to get a lot of work out of him." Before anyone could bid, the slave opened his mouth and said, "I am not going to work for anybody." The auctioneer told him to keep quiet. The bid went on and on and a man at the back kept bidding, refusing to back down and he went up and up and finally nobody could compete with him and he got the bid and the auctioneer said, "He's all yours!" The man came forward with the money, gave the money to the auctioneer and the auctioneer gave him the keys of the shackles. As the new owner dragged this man away, the slave began muttering "I am not going to work for you." The owner just kept quiet and took him away from the crowd, undid the key, took off the shackles off his hands and his feet and he said, "Now, you are no longer a slave. I didn't buy you; I don't know where you got the idea. But I didn't buy you to use you to work for me; I bought you to free you. You are a free man, you can go where you like. The world is yours!" This slave did not know how to react. He was so shocked by this that he fell down on his knees and he said to the slave owner who bought him, "I will work for you all the rest of my life!"

Not bought to be Used – But share His World

That is the attitude we must have towards Christ. Christ did not buy us so that He may use us; He bought us that He may share with us His throne and His kingdom and all the joys of heaven. That's why He bought us, why He redeemed us. It was free to us, but it was very costly to God.

Every Sin – All means All

Sometimes we just don't get it. We know our old sins are forgiven, but we think, Now I've got to toe the line and make sure I don't mess up from here on out. That's not salvation. That's not justification. Every sin you've ever committed, or are presently committing, or ever will commit in the future is forgiven and forgotten because where sin abounded, grace did much more abound (Romans 5:20). The price has been paid.

Romans 5:20 (NKJV) ²⁰Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,

Paul warns the consequences of Rejecting Jesus

(Acts 13:40 NKJV) "Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

(Acts 13:41 NKJV) "Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you."

(Acts 13:42 NKJV) So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

Quotes Habakkuk 1 – Babylonians Coming /

Paul quotes here Habakkuk 1, which speaks of the Babylonians coming down and crushing a rebellious at heart Nation of Israel. A Nation that had a corrupt king and leaders, and a people that ignored the Law of God. God said to them through the prophets that judgment would come upon them through a wicked and evil nation such as the Babylonians – but the people of the day said basically, "oh a loving and kind God would never allow such a thing to happen." Paul quotes that passage and ties it in with his sermon to say to all the hearers, a loving and kind God will do

all that it takes to bring you to repentance, and He will do a work in your day that will blow you away, don't mistake Him and His ways.

Habakkuk 1:5 (NKJV)⁵ *"Look among the nations and watch—
Be utterly astounded!
For I will work a work in your days
Which you would not believe, though it were told you.*

Habakkuk 1:6 (NKJV)⁶ *For indeed I am raising up the Chaldeans,
A bitter and hasty nation
Which marches through the breadth of the earth,
To possess dwelling places that are not theirs.*

Has Sent the Promised Messiah – Don't miss Him

He has sent the Promised Messiah, all of history has lead up to Him, and now you have the opportunity to receive Him, don't miss it. The work is mighty, it will blow you Away

(Acts 13:42 NKJV) **So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.**

Gentiles – Paul tell us More

"Hey, Paul! Come and tell us more about this justification," said the Gentiles. "Maybe the Jews don't get it, but this is terrific news to us!"

Reminded of Young Mother

I am reminded of a young mother whose face was badly disfigured. Her little girl was continually ridiculed by the children in school because of her mother's appearance. (You know how cruel children can be.) When the little girl was old enough, the mother explained to her that when she was a baby there was a dreadful fire in the apartment and, although the mother was able to save the little girl, the mother herself suffered very severe burns in the process. From that day on, the little girl was no longer embarrassed about her mother. Every time she looked into her mother's face it was a reminder of just how much she was loved.

Read these Accounts / See His beaten Face / No Double-Jeopardy / Tell me More

And so it is that every time I read this word, a sermon such as this, and see His beaten and bloodied face, His nail pierced hands, and think that there is no double-jeopardy, that I can't be retried for my sin, every time read these accounts and I look into His face I am reminded of just how much I am loved, and love to hear it over and over again.

Romans 1:16 (NKJV)¹⁶*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.*

The Gospel of Grace

Acts 13:42 – 14:18

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Last Study – Master Artist / Red – White – Yellow - Blue

Last week we finished our study of Paul's first sermon, and powerful it was. Paul the master artist painted the canvas a deep dark black, and then applied the brilliant colors of salvation to it; red, blood red that is – the blood of Jesus which one drop will cleanse man of all sin past, present, and future, make the human heart white as pure snow. And Paul applied the bright and brilliant color of yellow to his sermon as he spoke in depth of the resurrection, which is the power of the gospel, and it through the resurrection that every man that receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will stand before Him and with Him in the heavens, as Jesus ascended into the heavenly blue skies to be with the Father, so too will we because it is done!

Encouraged

We were encouraged last week to:

Finishing the Course – to finish strong and courageously as John the Baptist did.

Not blind faith – God hasn't asked us to have blind faith as He gives solid proof through and through in this Word and World around us.

Trading Places – to remember and refer back to how Jesus traded places with us, taking my sin, my cross, and my shame.

No Double Jeopardy – and the joyous news that there is no double-jeopardy, and we can never be tried again for our sin, for it is was legally decided in the "Court-of-the-Cross", and we are JUSTIFIED! We never have to look over our shoulders again, we can walk and live as free men!

The Gentiles say Alright / As We Gather Again – Can't hear it Enough

The Gentiles are blown away by this awesome word of God spoken by Paul, and they say oh stay and tell us more. And so it is like us as we gather here on Sunday, tonight at the Christmas Banquet, at the Home Fellowships, oh Lord tell us more, we can't hear this good news enough times.

Let's Pick it Up / As Paul picks it Up – As Satan picks it Up

So let's pick it up, as Paul picks it up again, and as Satan picks it up because he can't stand to see and hear people receiving and celebrating Jesus Christ.

Blessings and Conflict at Antioch

(Acts 13:42 NKJV) So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.

(Acts 13:43 NKJV) Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Grace – the Central Theme of Paul’s Ministry / 120 Times – Paul Knew Grace / I Know It
Verse 43 - persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. Grace – a central theme of Paul’s ministry as he will use the word grace over 120 times in his writings (compare that to John who only used it 7 times). Paul, the Apostle of grace, for surely a man that knew grace. As I look back on my life, I too teach heavily on grace, because it was grace that saved a wretch like me.

Grace drew us to Salvation / Grace teaches us to Deny Lust / Grace looking for His Return
Paul will say it was the grace of God that drew us to salvation. But let me not be misunderstood, it isn’t grace as a license to sin, for Paul will say it is grace that teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and it is by grace that we are to be looking for His soon return, because we can see Him and not be ashamed of our sin, but embrace and behold Him because of His grace that says, “come unto Me”!

Titus 2:11-14 (NKJV) ¹¹For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, ¹²teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, ¹³looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

1 Peter 1:13 (NKJV) ¹³Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Grace that Saved Us – Keeps Us – Will take us Home

Paul says it is grace that saved us, grace that keeps us, and grace that will take us home.

Paul encourages New Believers Continue in Grace / Grace & Doctrine / No Grace - Problem

So Paul encourages these new believers to continue in grace; the writer of Hebrews (most likely Paul) says it is good that a believer be established in grace, and not get over-board on doctrines and traditions that will take us away from grace. Beloved, if you every finds yourself short on grace, know that there is something wrong with your present doctrine.

Hebrews 13:9 (NKJV) ⁹Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them.

Paul said Continue in Grace – but they Didn’t / Galatians / Spirituality & Misery

To his followers, Paul said, “Continue in grace. Continue in grace. Continue in grace.” Did they? No. This same group had to be addressed later in the Book of Galatians because they believed the rap of those who came to them, saying, “It’s nice that you’re believers in Jesus and that you think you’re forgiven. But if you really want to be spiritual, you must be circumcised because spirituality and misery go hand in hand.” Drift away from the precepts of grace and you will drift into spiritual misery and discontentment. Stay in His grace and you will stay in all that grace is – the nature and attribute of God.

Galatians 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,

Galatians 3:2-3 (NKJV) ²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

When we Dwell on His Grace – Drawn to be with Him / Nothing more Powerful in our Life

When we dwell on God’s grace, His kindness, we are lead back to hearts that are melted for Him, that long to see Him, to be with Him, and nothing will be more powerful in a believers life than when they are in a place of longing for Him. All judgmental or critical spirit will flee at His grace as we consider ourselves in His grace (read “Your Kindness” lyrics before proceeding). All our self-righteousness (our works) will be foolishness to us as we see there is nothing we could ever add on to His work of grace; and the beauty of that is that we will then experience total freedom, because we know we can’t add anything to our salvation, so we will then find ourselves basking in His love and forgiveness, and as Paul writes, that will naturally have us fleeing from the lusts of the world and we will find ourselves living in purity before our Lord. Oh what grace it is, His grace, even after the eyes of God have found our failures and our shame, His heart would never leave us, He would always be for us now that is grace, and Paul’s great counsel to a group of young believers before he would leave them is “continue in the grace”. New believers or older believers, failings is certain in our still carnal hearts and mind, and when you fail, run back to the

grace, run back to the grace, for our tendencies is to want to just give up and quit. These new believers would have their share of failings, and Paul's word – run back and stay under “Grace” and grace will see you through. So that word applies to you and me today – let us continue in His grace.

Your Kindness lyrics
By Leslie Phillips

Waiting for angry words to sear my soul
Knowing I don't deserve another chance
Suddenly the kindest words I've ever heard
Come flooding from God's heart

(Chorus)
It's your kindness that leads us
To repentance Oh Lord
Knowing that You love us
No matter what we do
Makes us want to love You too
(Repeat)

No excuse no one to blame
No way to hide
The eyes of God have found my failures
Found my pain
He understands my weaknesses
And knows my shame
But His heart never leaves me.

(Repeat Chorus)
(Bridge)

If You are for us
Who can be against us
You gave us everything
even Your only Son

(Repeat Chorus)

It is the Gospel of Grace – that saved a Wretch like Me / Stay under Umbrella – Extend Out
Grace, it is the gospel of grace, it is amazing grace that saved a wretch like me, so let's stay under that umbrella of grace, and enjoy the grace extended unto us.

(Acts 13:44 NKJV) On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

Whole City Comes – Grace travels Fast / What every man Wants

The whole city comes to hear this gospel of grace. Grace travels fast, it travels fast because it is what all men covet. Enjoy His grace beloved, and extend His grace to others.

(Acts 13:45 NKJV) But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.

Envy the Root / Not because Marriages Healed – Lives Changed – Addiction - Depression
Envy, the root of why they are upset; not because lives are changed, not because marriages are healed, not because drug addictions are broken, not because people are being lifted out of depression, not because families are eating dinner together again, but because of envy.

(Acts 13:46 NKJV) Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

(Acts 13:47 NKJV) "For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

How Could God send someone to Hell? - People Reject / Once Heard – You now the Judge
Verse 46 - but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life - As the question is always posed, how could a God of love send someone to hell? The answer is that He doesn't send, people choose it by rejecting His offer of salvation. These men rejected the gospel Paul has just preached, and Paul clearly says – you judge yourself. Once a person has heard the gospel, they now become the judge of their eternal life.

Quote Isaiah 42 / Scripture must be within Context / Something Corporately can be Indv
“Okay, if you Jews are not receiving this, we'll do what Isaiah 42 prophesied,” said Paul and Barnabas. “We'll be a light to the Gentiles.” All application of Scripture must be taken within its context, meaning the Scripture only means what it means as it is applied in its context; but see here that meaning can be applied to whomever will receive it, not just to whomever it is written. Although Isaiah 42 was written to Israel corporately, Paul and Barnabas will apply it to themselves individually because God has spoken to them by taking that very same word, and now “commanding” (applying it to them specifically). God can speak a passage corporately, and then come into your prayer life and speak that same passage individually and specifically. Along that same thought, you too can do the same, Psalm 17 says Israel is the apple of God's eye, and yes it was written to Israel corporately, but the depth of the meaning is that God people's are the apple of His eye – and therefore I don't have any problem claiming that verse for you and for me, and telling you that you are the apple of God's eye. I love it in times of prayer where God takes a word and says, this word is for you individually and specifically. The word becomes personally, the word becomes the “Person” of the Godhead coming into you, and taking up residence, as the Word becomes flesh again, this time in you.

Isaiah 42:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶ “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness,
And will hold Your hand;
I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the Gentiles,
⁷ To open blind eyes,
To bring out prisoners from the prison,
Those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

Psalms 17:8 (NKJV) ⁸ Keep me as the apple of Your eye;
Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

John 1:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

(Acts 13:48 NKJV) Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Sounds like Contradiction / Which is It? - Both / Expound - Yes

Verse 48 - And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.- for those that were appointed to receive eternal life. Sounds like I just contradicted what I had just previously said about man rejecting the gospel is judging himself, for here it says those appointed to eternal life believed, and just prior those who rejected judged themselves. Which is it? Both! Ray, explain this more, solve this 2,000 year old debate; is it God predestining someone for salvation, or is it man having a choice in the matter and saying I want to be saved. The answer is “yes”; so there I have just expounded more, I have gone from just “both” to the theological depth of “yes”.

Bottom Line – If haven't done So – TODAY you Need to Do It

Here is the bottom line, if you are here today and never given your heart to Jesus Christ by asking Him to forgive your sins and come into your life – then YOU need to do that today.

2 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NKJV) ¹We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ²For He says:

“In an acceptable time I have heard you,
And in the day of salvation I have helped you.”

Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Here is way I see It – Predestination outside of My Time Domain / Man’s Decision Inside

Here is the way I see it, predestination is outside of my time domain (appointed is past tense). Man’s decision is inside this time domain (and the clock says “today” is the right time). So I am going to preach inside the time domain that I live, and that time domain says you need to make a decision yourself, and if you reject Him, you judge yourself unto eternal damnation.

God is Omni – Because Outside our Time Domain / When I Enter Eternal Domain

God is Omnipresent (ever present), Omnipotent (all powerful), and Omniscient (all knowing) because He is eternal, because He is outside of our time dimension. When I get into His time dimension, then I will clearly understand and see exactly what that (appointed, predestined, called) meant – and I will say, wow you are amazing. But for TODAY, I say to all men everywhere:

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

And

Ephesians 1:3-6 (NKJV) ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

That’s when I Preach – But when I Pray / Lean “Heavenly” / Your Tomorrow still My Now

Now that is when I preach, but when I pray, it is totally different; when I pray I lean heavily (or should I say heavenly) on that He is outside my time dimension. He is not surprised or taken back by anything that is going on in my life, He would say to you TODAY, Your tomorrow is still My now (for I am Eternal), and I am already there waiting for you to come, and I’ve taken care of your tomorrow long before you ever got there (because I’m already there). Ray you can rest in My Omnipresent (ever present), Omnipotent (all powerful), and Omniscient (all knowing), that I Am eternal, that I am outside your time dimension. And, I don’t have to wait to get to heaven to say, WOW, you are totally amazing Lord. Cast all your cares upon the Eternal God – for He is already there working on your tomorrow along with your TODAY.

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) ⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

(Acts 13:49 NKJV) And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout all the region.
(Acts 13:50 NKJV) But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region.

(Acts 13:51 NKJV) But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium.

(Acts 13:52 NKJV) And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Shaking the Dust – Not defile Israel / Jesus said to / Paul rather Upset them – then rest Them

Shaking the dust off the feet was a common practice in Israel. When they travelled outside of Israel on business, when they came to the boarder of reentering Israel they would take their sandals off and shake the dust off of them because they didn’t want to bring unholy Gentile dust into the Holy land. Paul and company are doing the same, giving them a picture that God is doing the same with them, shaking off their unholy dust, and they will not enter into the Holy City of God in heaven (as Jesus had directed them to do). No doubt got them all fired up, can you believe what they just did, oh that burns me up they would say. You know Paul obviously would rather them be upset and fired-up rather than indifferent, saying hmm that was interesting. I’d rather upset someone and have them continually coming back and rethinking what I said, rather than saying, hmm that Ray is a nice guy. Upset them, shake them up, get them thinking.

Luke 9:5 (NKJV) ⁵And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet as a testimony against them.”

JW's take this Literally

Funny, the JW's take this passage literally, and some will do that when they are rejected. They had come to my apartment in Florida, and I rejected them, and I was peaking out the door watching to see, I'm like come on, come on, and they sat on the step and took their shoes off and shook the dust, and I was like YES, they consider me a lost cause to their case, my countering to their doctrine left them believing I was totally a lost cause.

In Life – Either Shake off – or – Shaken Up / Shake it off – Go On

Verse 52 - And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit - On a closing note, in ministry and in life, we will either “shake it off” or get shaken up. Those who shake the dust off their feet when an attack comes or when rejection hits will go on. Those who get shaken up will quit. I pray you and I will be those who, like Paul and Barnabas, shake off the dust and keep going in order that those around us might be “filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost.”

Chapter 14

Preaching in Iconium

(Acts 14:1 NKJV) Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.

50 Miles / Wondered what Talked about / Good to have Ministry Partner / Thanks You

So this is a good 50 mile walk to Iconium. If they can travel at 3 miles an hour (the average walking speed), then it is a good 2 day hike. Wondered what they talked about. No doubt about what just happened. It is good to have a partner in ministry, just as Jesus gave example to as He sent them out in pairs. It is good to have ministry partners so you can encourage each other when maybe you feel bummed-out, rejected, or maybe even quitting. Let me also take this time to thank you all personally for partnering with me on this ministry. We truly are all partners who are working to further the Kingdom of God right here in Anne Arundel, and it will take a large partnership as we have some working with the children, some with the teens, some in set-up, some in media ministry, some in worship, and of course this time domain requires funds. So I pray a special blessings to all of you for partnering in this ministry, and I look forward to what God is going to do in 2009.

Mark 6:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷And He called the twelve to Himself, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them power over unclean spirits. ⁸He commanded them to take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bag, no bread, no copper in their money belts— ⁹but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics.

May Believed – so here comes More Attacks

Verse 1 - and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed – So many believe, and here comes more attacks.....

(Acts 14:2 NKJV) But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

(Acts 14:3 NKJV) Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

(Acts 14:4 NKJV) But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles.

Grace hard to Swallow for Jews / Today – People can't Swallow they are Sinners / Attack

For these Jews the gospel of grace was hard to swallow, for they were so into their works, their good deeds, and their self-righteousness. Same today as many people (and you know them) they don't believe in your gospel, become attacking to your gospel, because your gospel says man is a sinner, man is separated from God, and no good work can fix the problem. They get mad at you because they don't want to admit that they are sinners, or if they some-what admit to it, they don't want to admit that their "good-deeds" don't cover that up for them. Yes I'm a sinner they say, but I do good-deeds, and so I'm a good person, and that makes everything ok. Application? It's not you, don't beat yourself up and think you are doing something wrong. Share the gospel in love, live it blamelessly, preach it today, and leave the Eternal God to take care of the "both" and "yes" part of gospel.

Ephesians 2:8 (NKJV) ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

Signs & Wonders to Confirm – Still Rejected / Bottom Line why Men Reject Gospel

God granted signs and wonders to confirm His messengers and the Message. Even in the midst of great signs and wonders (and what they were we are not told – other than they were great), yet people still didn't receive it. Why, and how couldn't they? The bottom line of why any man rejects the gospel invitation:

John 3:18-21 (NKJV) ¹⁸"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone

practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

(Acts 14:5 NKJV) And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them,
(Acts 14:6 NKJV) they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.
(Acts 14:7 NKJV) And they were preaching the gospel there.

Sometimes you Leave – Not being a Failure

If you ever have to make a decision when faced with rejection, challenged on whether to stay, or is leaving a copout, being weak, a failure, you have this verse as proof-text that sometimes you do get up and go.

Note – Sometimes hard Right-in-Middle God's Will / What doing Wrong – They Fasted

Please note, sometimes hard is right in the middle of God's will. We can fall into the American easy-mentality that if things aren't going easy we must be doing something wrong – no sometimes hard is right in the middle of God's perfect will for us. Remember Paul and Barnabas had prayed and fasted before God spoke to them to send them out on this missionary journey. **Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV)** ²As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Good Word for Christmas / Paul & Barnabas 2 Cities – 2 Kicked Out / Right in God's Will

I'm glad to be at this passage of Scriptures right before the holidays because we will get to see people we haven't seen in a year or more, and maybe last time we saw them we tried to share with them, or had spoke about how God had been working in your life, and things somehow seemed to go awry – I'm glad to be reminded about how Paul and Barnabas had been to two cities, and kicked out of two cities, and they were right in the middle of God's will.

They Leave – New Church Established – And Continues / Preached True Gospel – It Lasts

They leave, and a new baby church is established. These new believers would no doubt face persecution and rejection, but they continued. Nothing but a bunch of new believers yet they continue on. How can that be? It can be because Paul and Barnabas spoke a true gospel, a gospel, not some watered down easy believism gospel. Beloved, don't preach for "a sinners prayer", preach a word that will last long after you are gone. Share the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, so help you God. God will take care of the follow-up, for everyone's tomorrow, God is already there saying, "I've taken care of your tomorrow long before you ever arrived at."

Paul and Barnabas called God's after healing Crippled Man

(Acts 14:8 NKJV) And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.
(Acts 14:9 NKJV) This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,
(Acts 14:10 NKJV) said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

Holy Spirit makes Sure it is Clear – this is a Miracle / Nearly Identical to Peter's

Just to make sure those who like to try to say it really wasn't a miracle, the Holy Spirit makes sure all readers see this man feet that had no strength, was crippled since birth, and had never walked in his life. This healing was nothing less than a miracle. Nearly identical to Peter's occurrence when he healed the lame man.

Paul exercises Gift of Discernment

Paul exercises the gift of discernment that God was saying, I'm going to heal him, so speak out to him, "rise up".

Got to power through the Hard Times – To get to good Times

I'm glad God recorded this for us, especially in this order; we see Paul and Barnabas kicked out of two cities, but they continue on and get to see and be a part of this mighty miracle. Remember this example God gives us in that in the economy of God we have to power through the hard times and continual resistance to get to those "moments". We can't expect to only have moments, we have to expect the hard times and resistance, and enjoy the moments in between the hard-times when they come. Don't grow weary in the hard times, wait for the due season, for it will come, it will come.

Galatians 6:9-10 (NKJV)⁹And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ¹⁰Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

(Acts 14:11 NKJV) Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

(Acts 14:12 NKJV) And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

(Acts 14:13 NKJV) Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.

(Acts 14:14 NKJV) But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out

(Acts 14:15 NKJV) and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,

(Acts 14:16 NKJV) "who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways.

(Acts 14:17 NKJV) "Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

(Acts 14:18 NKJV) And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

People totally Missed what Paul Said – Saw what he Did Instead

Verse 11, says the people saw what Paul had done, totally missed out what Paul had said. It isn't what Paul had done, but what Paul had said, he had been preaching the gospel, the power of God. If they would have heard first they would have known it wasn't Paul who brought healing, but God.

They won't steal God's Glory

Paul and Barnabas won't take God's glory. This could have been the end of their ministry, but they point back to the Lord. I would think after all the rejection it felt good to be appreciated, but for Paul and Barnabas, they wouldn't receive a drop of God's glory.

Isaiah 42:8 (NKJV)⁸ I am the LORD, that is My name;

And My glory I will not give to another,

Nor My praise to carved images.

It Pays to know the Scripture / Captain Cook

It pays to know your Scripture; Capt. Cook the great explorer should have read this account. When Captain James Cook, discoverer of the Hawaiian Islands, first dropped anchor in Hanauma Bay, he was greeted with great ceremony. Realizing the islanders thought he was their god, Lono, Cook thought, Oh, well. Why not? Consequently, he and his men were treated to everything the island had to offer—until one evening, when, Cook, about to take advantage of yet another woman, was clubbed in the back of the head by her husband, who, in his anger, forgot that Captain Cook was Lono. Bleeding and groaning, the Captain went down. By the time he regained consciousness, he found himself looking into the eyes of his aggressor, who said, "Gods don't bleed. Nor do they groan." And Cook was killed on the spot.

No Other Application Needed

No other application is needed for us today who would take glory that is due God.

Speaking to Largely Gentile Crowd / Speaks Creation / Creator Love for Them

Paul and Barnabas are speaking to a largely Gentile population, and we see them speak to them for where they are at. Paul doesn't give Jewish history; he meets them where they are at and gives them world history. Paul speaks of the creation proving a Creator (Romans 1), and the great love that the Creator has for them. Although society rejects Him and nations turn from Him, God still does good. He allows rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. He allows food to be produced. He allows our hearts to be filled with gladness. He allows people to have life, to experience the joy of a sunrise, to surf, to hold a baby—all because of His goodness.

Acts 14:14-17 (NKJV) ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out ¹⁵and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, ¹⁶who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

Creation Bears Testimony / He Sent His Son to bear Testimony of His Love

His whole creation bears testimony to His Eternal power, but He sent His only begotten Son to bear testimony of His love for man that He placed in His creation. God came down, so that we could see His heart for the hungry, His forgiveness for the woman caught in sin, His compassion for those who are not whole, His passion for the broken-hearted, His desire for the widow and the orphaned. God became man so we could see His face, behold Him and hold Him. The Eternal, all powerful Heavenly Father, has given testimony through His creation, but at the cross we see the depth of His love. The God who gives breath to every man, gave His last breath for all men there upon the cross. The same hands that created, were the same hands stretched so desperate to reconcile all men to Himself – for it is the "Gospel according to Grace."

**“We must through many tribulations
enter the kingdom of God”
Acts 14:19-28**

Theme of the Book of Acts:

(Acts 1:8 NKJV) *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

1st Mission Journey / Lame – Zeus – Preaches / Now v.19

Well Paul and company are on their first missionary journey and what a journey it has been. We will finish chapter 14 in our time together today, and just a refresher, in the first half of this chapter we see Paul and company are in Lystra; and Paul through the power of God, brought healing upon a man lame since birth. The people get all excited and want to make sacrifice to him and Barnabas, thinking they were the mystical Greek gods Zeus and Hermes, but Paul puts the stop on that and preaches another masterful message of God's great power, and His great love. Sounds like the perfect mission trip, that is until verse 19 –they stone Paul and leave him for dead.

(Acts 14:8 NKJV) And in Lystra a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

(Acts 14:9 NKJV) This man heard Paul speaking. Paul, observing him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed,

(Acts 14:10 NKJV) said with a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" And he leaped and walked.

(Acts 14:11 NKJV) Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

(Acts 14:12 NKJV) And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

(Acts 14:19 NKJV) Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

v.22 – Trough Many Tribulations / Whole Message of Cross – Entering / My Kids / Eternal

In verse 22 Paul will say to the people, *"we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."* Paul's whole message, and the whole reason for the cross, is for one thing, the entering the kingdom of God. That is what it is all about precious saint – entering the kingdom of God; from the cradle to the cross, it all about entering the kingdom of God. That is all that I am about with my family, my kids, because I live for one thing, to see their face radiating the glory of Jesus before the throne of God. I want to look over and see them with lifted hands, lifted voice, right there at the throne of God, and look at my wife and said we did. It is all about eternity, everything else is temporal.

(Acts 14:22 NKJV) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

We Must Through Many / See what Meant to Paul – and Us

Paul will say to the people, *"we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."* Let's see what all that meant to Paul and company then, and to you and me today, verse 19.

Paul Stoned and Left for Dead

(Acts 14:19 NKJV) *Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.*

Quite the Beating / Joined Forces – Can't seek approval of Man

That's quite the beating. Those who had expelled Paul from Antioch and those who had sought to stone him in Iconium joined forces and followed him to Lystra. This is why we can not live looking for the approval of man, because one minute they want to make sacrifices to them as gods, and the next minute they are stoning them. The same crowds that cried "Hosanna", just a few days later cried "crucify Him". The fear, or acceptance, of man is a snare. Whether that is family or friend, don't strive for their acceptance, but in all things look for the approval God, and not worry what that means to any man.

Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ *The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.*

Wonder if Paul Thinking Back / Eastern Mysticism / Separate – Hard is right in Middle

Now I wonder if Paul was thinking back about the stoning of Stephen and his approving of it, the holding of the coats, and I wonder if he (for I no doubt would) be saying, "I deserve it, what comes around goes around". Hey now Christian, that isn't how God works, that mentality is Eastern mysticism (the whole karma thing), that is not Christianity, as simple as that is for us to know and believe this morning, but how many times do we sometimes think that's how it works, God gives payback for the wrongs we have done (yes there are consequences for our sin, so if there is a need to repent, repent). Listen Christian, don't live your Christianity like God is out to get you, God says that He knows the thoughts that He thinks towards us, thoughts of peace and not of evil; He is for us, always. You know the thought, if God loves me, then why am I suffering, why do I keep getting running out of town, why doesn't God protect me, am I sure I am called? Lord why are you letting this happen to me? The Holy Spirit said separate unto Me Paul and Barnabas; sometimes hard is right in the middle of God's will for your life.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV) ¹¹*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.*

Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV) ²*As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."* ³*Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.*

2000 years ago

Jesus Christ, God, did not leave heaven 2000 years ago and come to be spit upon, stripped and humiliated, nailed to a cross for 6 grueling hours on a filthy hill in Palestine to make your life miserable, and came that you may have life, and that more abundant.

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*

(Acts 14:20 NKJV) **However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.**

Wonder what Disciples Doing / Took Risk / There is a Place to Go / Felt Wiped Out / Revive

I wonder what the disciples are doing. They are gathered around him, are they praying, are they weeping, are they scared, was Dr. Luke trying to revive him? We don't know, but them being there is boldness on their behalf, and risky for they could have been stoned by association. Christian, there is a place for us to go when a brother or sister is down – get there and get there quickly, and stay there until they get up again. Oh maybe not stay there in their house physically, but if need be, stay with them in their life, continually lifting them up in prayer, continually coming around them, continually being there for them until they can stand again. We all have experienced times when we have felt wiped out, finished, dead. And then some precious people gathered around us and we felt our hearts resurrected, our spirits revived. There are those whom the Lord will lead you to stand by, hang out with, and be there for—be it in person, over the phone, or through a letter. Be sensitive to His leading—and watch for revival. There are lots of people hurting around us, be there, breath on them a fresh wind from God, and watch for a revival.

Suppose Dead – based on Something Known / Thrown in the Heap

Back in verse 19 (speaking of Paul) that they “supposing him to be dead” - the word for “suppose” as that word is used elsewhere in the bible is that the presumption comes off of something known. So to the stoners, to all indicators (whether they checked his pulse, finger under his nose, whatever it was), Paul is dead, done! So they drag him out of the city, probably throwing him in the garbage heap at the city dump, brushing off their hands saying, so much for that, that should be the last we hear of this Jesus.

(Acts 14:19 NKJV) Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

Paul was possibly Dead – Maybe what he referenced to in 2 Cor 12

Some think that Paul actually was dead, and that in his letter to the church in Corinth, this event is what he was referring to:

2 Corinthians 12:1-4 (NKJV) ¹It is doubtless not profitable for me to boast. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord: ²I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was caught up to the third heaven. ³And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—⁴how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul heads back to City – Can’t Stop man like Paul / Hey – Didn’t finish the Job

Paul rises up and heads back into the city. You can’t stop a man like Paul. If this was when he was caught up into heaven, then Paul probably went back into the city to get stoned again, hey you didn’t finish the job, come on now get some big ones and do it right so I can get back up there.

Christian – Closer to heaven – Further World / 24 Hours in Hell / Spend Time in Heaven

You see Christian, the closer you live to heaven, the further you will live from this earth. Paul, body beaten and bruised isn’t looking to go get some rest and recovery, he is fueled by the eternal view he has, the kingdom of God. I remember talking to my one friend and I said if God dangled someone over the flames of hell for 24 hours that would change their perspective on eternity, and he said, “better yet, let them spend 24 hours in heaven with the Savior and then say, this is what you would miss out on.” Christian, make sure you make it a part of your regular thought and prayer life to go and spend time in heaven (daily), read passages of Scriptures specifically on heaven, spend time just thinking of what it will be like (no more pain, no more sorrow, no more failings, no more disappointment) just you and the Great I Am, walking and fellowshiping, loving and laughing together, and enter into worship about Him and heaven. The closer you live to heaven, the further you will live from this earth.

Paul goes Back – got more to Say / What gets you Up in the Morning / Closer Heaven

So Paul gets up, heads into the city (with his company), knowing there was no shortage of rocks in the city, but I’m going back in because I still got more to say. How do you stop a man like that, he is amazing! Hey Christian, can I ask you today, “What gets you up?” What gets you up in the morning, is it an alarm clock or a calling, is it a paycheck or another opportunity to invest in the kingdom? Christian, the closer you live to heaven, the further you will live from this earth, and that will determine what gets you up!

Speaking of getting back up, the second half of verse 20:

20 Mile Walk / Paul wrote Timothy / Parents – do kids see you Getting Up / No Breaks

Verse 20 - And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe – About 20 miles, and can you imagine that conversation. Barnabas asking man what happened, how did you get up, what did you see, how is it possible that you can be walking right now after taking such a beating. Paul wrote to Timothy to continue on, regardless of how tough it gets, no matter what you have been through. Paul tells Timothy the Lord delivered him out of all that came upon him. Dads (moms too), do your kids see you getting back up after you have been beaten down? Beaten down by the world, beaten down maybe by a failure, beaten down in ministry, what ever it may be, to every parent may we be the parent that our kids see getting back up, going back to stand tall against it

all again. May we not be a parent that says, that's it for me, I'm taking a break, just a couple drinks, or just a few months out of regular church attendance, I'm going to go "click" for awhile. Parents, get back up, let your kids see you standing tall, no matter how far you may have been beaten down to.

2 Timothy 3:10-12 (NKJV) ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Strengthening the Converts

(Acts 14:21 NKJV) And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,

(Acts 14:22 NKJV) strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Lystra – 20 / Iconium – 40 / Antioch – 60 / How far will you Go

Lystra, - is 20 miles away, and then back down to Iconium which is 40 miles away, and then to Antioch which is 60. Christian, how many miles are you willing to go to strengthen the souls of a disciple. Would you walk 20, 40, 60 miles? How far will you go to strengthen the soul of another believer? How far will you go to give a cup of cold water to another believer who is spiritually parched? How far will you go to give a hot drink to that brother that feels left out in the cold? These men are willing to travel 20, 40, and 60 miles to do it. Again, there is a time and a place – to go!

Not in Promise Book / Notice – MANY / Living in Post-Christian Era – Stand, be Persecuted

Verse 22 -"We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God." – You won't find this verse in the Precious Promise" book, but we should all have it highlighted in our Bibles; and we need to double circle that word "many", for it doesn't say one, a couple, or here-and-there, but many. "Many" is the promise for us today, for the America is now following the way of England, and a once great Christian nation is now approaching a post-Christian nation, where believing and proclaiming the Bible is the Word of God and it being non-negotiable to live contrary too it is now limited to the minority of the Nation, not the majority of the nation. No new laws are being written or formed based on the Biblical principles, just take a cursory look and we will see it is the opposite, and the laws being formed and passed are all pushing away from the biblical principles. The world says that Christians are intolerant, but that is all a façade, they won't be happy with anything less than endorsement, and if you don't endorse it opposition or judgment will be against you. The Christian who gets up, stands up, will not bow out or down, will face more and more tribulation for doing so. This isn't a promise, it is a proclamation, so think it not strange when trials and tribulations come your way.

1 Peter 4:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.

Tribulation means – to Pressure

This word for "tribulation" means: (a pressing, pressing together, pressure), And we can feel the pressures can't we?

Pressures for Living Contrary to World – All About Kingdom

Pressure coming from people is not the only tribulation Christians face, for we all have our tribulations in this world, because we are desiring to live in the ways of the Lord, doing the things that are pleasing to the Him; and that my friend is totally contrary to this world's system, and this world system is nearly the complete opposite of the kingdom of God, and it is all about the kingdom of God. For:

- We want to be good stewards of the money God has given us (so we struggle hard with our finances), where the majority of the world just charges it, and then ask for a bailout (bankruptcy) later.

- We want to raise our kids in the ways of the Lord, we want to show people the beauty of the Lord, we ourselves want to live in purity, and all these things are contrary to this world system, and living against the flow of the world brings tribulation.
- Want to live faithfully and in purity to your spouse? You are bombarded daily with images and storylines of the things that are contrary to living such a way. Fornication, adultery are being propped up and glorified all around us.

God does mighty Work in Trib / Ask Shad, Mesh, Abed – Preferred walk in Fire / Try Avoid

But God does a mighty and wondrous work in and through the periods of tribulation, it need not be something we try to avoid at all costs, for God does amazing things in the tribulation. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew this. They were in a fiery trial, indeed, yet they didn't come out until they were ordered out (Daniel 3:26) because they preferred walking in the fire with the Lord to sitting in the shade without Him. What happened to the fourth Man in the furnace (Daniel 3:25)? He remained in the fire. Where is Jesus—the fourth Man—today? In the fire. We have a tendency to try to avoid the fire whenever possible—and it's a great mistake. I'm not saying we should be masochists. I am saying it's in the fire, when times are tough, when your heart is breaking that Jesus is most visible, most real, and most precious.

Wood Sled / Break Wheat from Chaff

Tribulum is where we get the word "tribulation". The "tribulum" was a wooden sled, and in the days of Jesus and Paul, the wheat was ground out on the threshing floor, they would take a "tribulum" (this wooden sled), and dragged it over the wheat to break the wheat grain from the husk (chaff). God uses tribulation in people's life to divide the wheat from the chaff. So after the wood sled was dragged over the wheat, they worker, usually on a night with a light breeze moving through, would take a pitch fork and tossing the two in the air. The wheat was heavier than the chaff and would fall back to the ground, but the light chaff would be blown away from the wheat off to the side.

Fort Still 1950, 1960

A United States Army officer who trained pupils at Fort Still for over 20 years once described the different qualities of the students during the two decades of his tenure. During the 1950's, he observed the students' attitude as being so lax that the instructors had trouble keeping their students awake during their lectures. This drastically changed in the mid 1960's. The students began taking meticulous notes and absorbing every word of instruction. So, what changed? The lectures weren't any different. Were mid 60s students somehow more diligent? No... but the circumstances had changed. The pupils of the 1950's weren't expecting to be sent to war, but the men in the 1960's were being prepared to go to Vietnam.

Through Many / There are 2 Kingdoms / Trib – Separate / Recognize Common Mistake

Paul says through "many" tribulations we enter the kingdom of heaven. There are two kingdoms, the kingdom of heaven, and the kingdom of this world, with Satan being the prince of this world. Here is something important that I want to make sure you understand, tribulation is meant to separate (as it was to separate the wheat from the chaff), and a main purpose God is allowing tribulation in our lives is to separate us from this world's system, and to be seeking first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). I want to recognize a very common mistake that Christians make (I know from personal experience) and that is that we can fail to recognize that just as God is trying to separate us from this world, Satan desires to separate us from God's world; and how often the mistake is made that during tribulations (pressures) in our lives, those things become the top rung of our lives. We say, as soon as I get through this, as soon as I can straighten this out, then I'll be able to rest and concentrate and have devotion times, get into Church and fellowship, and even serve in this area or that – but I got to get these things that are pressuring me taken care of first before I can rest. I tell ya one of the worse things about teaching the bible is that so often you have to live your sermon, and this week I had pressure all over the place. First on Monday my cell phone dies, no big deal, until Tuesday when the head gasket on my car blows, and anti-freeze is pouring out my engine (it nice to have a cell phone incase you get stranded). Then on Wednesday my computer crashes; and the guy at the repair

shop says 3-5 to look at it, and I say it is Thursday but Sunday is a coming, I need a computer to work on my message. For me, it was a continual struggle to say, after I get all this fixed then I can settle back in a seek the Lord, spend time with Him, but I resisted because I know, it is Satan's desire to separate me from the Lord, even if only a day or so, just as long as he can separate me. Seek first the kingdom of God, and two things will happen, one - you will have peace in the midst of the storm, and two – you'll have a settled mind to make good decisions about what needs to be done in the storm and how to get through it. As I often have said, perseverance is not getting on through (that trial or struggle), perseverance is hanging on to (hang on to Jesus) and He will get you through.

John 14:30 (KJV) ³⁰*Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.*

Matthew 6:33 (KJV) ³³*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

Whole Message of Cross – Entering the Kingdom / I live to Enter – to See Family Too

Paul's whole message, and the whole reason for the cross, is the entering the kingdom of God. That is what it is all about, and that is all that I am about with my family, my kids, because I live for one thing, to see their face radiating the glory of Jesus before the throne of God. I want to look over and see them with lifted hands, lifted voice, right there at the throne of God, and look at my wife and said we did. It is all about eternity, everything else is temporal.

Key to Enduring – Being Renewed Daily / 2 Cor 4 – to Scope / Need Daily / Africa - Cling

The key to enduring is being renewed daily. Paul says our natural man is fading away, and we need to be renewed day by day, by the things that are not seen (for things seen are only temporary). Paul says the renewing does not come through the temporal things, but looking into the eternal things. Paul says I look "scopio" (where we get our word "to scope" as we scope something out, to put under a microscope, to bring into focus. Paul says I live my life bringing into focus the things of God, the things that are eternal, and while I keep my focus on those things day by day I am renewed. Paul says he needs to be refreshed and renewed daily, as do we need refreshing from the Lord everyday. The message we are currently enjoying is illegal in 52 countries, other areas there is just a tremendous resistance to the Christians, or life is just ahrd in that region. As I talked to Phoebe in Africa, I see her Christianity is what she clings to daily, my Christianity is often distracted by meaningless things, it can be easy for me to forget, or set aside, the need for daily renewing, but I do need it daily, we all need it daily.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 (NKJV) ¹⁶*Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, ¹⁸while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

Ephesians 4:23-24 (NKJV) ²³*and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

Colossians 3:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

So they are heading home, and lets just read through to the end of this chapter.

(Acts 14:23 NKJV) So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Put Alongside Of

Commended means "to put alongside of". That is the greatest place to place any believer, right next to Jesus Christ.

(Acts 14:24 NKJV) And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.

(Acts 14:25 NKJV) Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

(Acts 14:26 NKJV) From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed.

Journey about 1 Year / 500 by Sea – 700 by Foot

So they have now been on this missionary journey for about 1 year or so, and now they are coming back home to Antioch, which was a major beachfront for the early church. This was about 500 miles by sea, and about 700 miles by foot.

The Work they had Completed / Great to Attach that to your Life

Verse 26 - where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed – The work which they had completed! What a great things to be attached to our life, and may we grab those words today and let them give us a boost to continue on, so that we too may complete the work.

(Acts 14:27 NKJV) Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

(Acts 14:28 NKJV) So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

1st Journey Recap

Imagine hearing Paul recap this whole journey, your jaw would drop:

- So we came into town and there was this sorcerer and Paul rebuked him and proclaimed blindness upon him (Acts 13:1-11),
- and the Governor (Martin O'Malley) got saved after hearing the word (Acts 13:12).
- Then in the next town we preached and a whole bunch of Gentiles got saved, and then filled with the Holy Spirit (13:13-49).
- Then the Jews ran us out of town, so we shook the dust off our feet and moved on (13:50-52).
- In the next town God did great signs and wonders, but then we heard about a plot to stone us and we left there (14:1-5).
- In the next town Paul healed this guy who was lame since birth, that was amazing to watch (14:6-10).
- Then they wanted to make sacrifices to us, they thought we were the gods Zeus and Hermes. But Paul preached a powerful message of Jesus Christ to calm that.
- But that didn't last long, for the Jews came up from Antioch and Iconium and stirred up the crowd, and they stoned Paul, and man it looked like he was totally dead, but then he got up and said let's go back in and preach.
- It was an amazing journey, so what have you guys been up to?

Door had been Open

Verse 27 - and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles - There had been an open door, good things for us to pray and ask God to do for us here in our Jerusalem.

Great 1st Journey / Look for one Yourself

Well Paul and company are on their first missionary journey and quite a journey it has been. Let me encourage anyone here today, if or when the opportunity comes to go on a mission trip, seize the opportunity. It almost isn't the real world, in that for that period of time (whether that be a week or two weeks, or even more) the distractions and cares of the world are greatly diminished, and for 24x7 it just comes down to you, Jesus Christ, and the "mission". So I encourage you to open yourself up to missions.