

ACTS: Barrier Breaking Faith



By going back to the beginning of the church we can learn from their start up about the power of Jesus' name, the power of being of one accord, and power of the filling of the Holy Spirit in people of faith in Christ The early church was one of **Barrier Breaking Faith** to go, persevere and succeed under persecution, never giving up.

The early church had what we call a learning curve. Faith lessons were learned, and God used them greatly as they shared the gospel and ministered in the name of Jesus. We can learn from these church pioneers, for they let no obstacle stop them.

The key purpose statement according to Dr. Frank Stagg is Acts 28:31 (Said of Paul as the book concludes, he is found) *...proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ boldly and unhindered*. It is a declaration of the ongoing work of the church. It is a declaration of the ongoing work of the church. No barriers could stop the church then or now! Do we have Barrier Breaking Faith?

A parallel statement is found in 2 Timothy 2:9-10 *... I suffer to the point of being bound like a criminal. But, the word of God is not bound. That is why I endure all things for the elect: so that they also may obtain salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

No Barrier too Big for the Gospel & No Holy Spirit Led Adventure Defeated

We live in a day of opportunity and challenge. The early church took the gospel to a pagan world, yet even after 2000+ years, much of our world is still pagan. Of the estimated 7 billion people on earth, 2 billion identify themselves as Christians. Even today in the USA only about a third of our nation identifies with a local Christian congregation. Even with all our years of missionary work there are still unreached people groups around the world, and unreached people right here in Gloucester.

- **What barriers does the church face today in fulfilling its mission?**
- **What resources does the church have for overcoming mission barriers?**
- **What difference does the resurrection make for our motivation?**
- **What role does the Holy Spirit have in the church today?**

Acts 1 Mission Essentials

- **Introduction 1:1-2** Author, Date, Purpose
- **Author** – Luke, the doctor and traveling companion of Paul Col. 4:14; Phm. 1:24

Written in third person referencing “they” and “them,” there are personal sections that identifies Luke as being part of the events. See the “we” sections Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-37; 28:1-16

- **Date:** AD 60’s Acts ends in AD 62-63. It could have been written during Paul’s Caesarean or Roman imprisonments ending with Paul still in prison. The apostles or eyewitnesses (2 Peter 1:16) had to be alive to pass on the record of events. The lack of record of the outcome of Paul before Caesar gives reason for an early 60’s date.

- **Purpose:** Volume 2 of a two part work, Luke & Acts.

Volume 1 Luke 1:1-4 “Just as the original eyewitnesses and servants of the word handed them down to us... an orderly sequence... so that you may know the certainty of the things about which you have been instructed.”

Volume 2 A continuation of the gospel of Luke. The narrative of the early church as empowered and led by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the truth of the gospel to all nations.

- **Post – Resurrection Appearances :3 (Cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4)**

[1] Holy Spirit Promise 1:4-5

Luke 3:16 *I baptize you with water, but the one more powerful than I am is coming. I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

John 14:16-17a *I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth. Cf. John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-14*

[2] Parousia speculation 1:6-7

Speculation about the nature of the kingdom of God sets up the definition of their mission. They are to build up the kingdom by their witness.

[3] Mission 1:8

John 15:27 *You will also testify, because you have been with me from the beginning. Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Jn. 20:21; Lk. 24:46-48 You are my witnesses of these things.*

Romans 10:14-17 (:17) *So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the message about Christ. Cf. 2 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9*

[4] Ascension 1:9-11 cf. Mark 16:19-20; Luke 24:50-53

In fulfillment of John 7:33-34, the ascension includes not only the rising of Jesus into heaven, but also the confirmation of two angels, as there were two angels who confirmed

the resurrection in Luke 24:4-8. In both incidences the witnesses were challenged to believe and give witness.

- **Pre – Pentecost Prayer 1:15-26**

Did they spend the entire time in the upper room hiding? Not all. Some: Lk. 24:53 *And they were continually in the temple praising God.* Others, who are identified in v. 13-14 were together for "United Prayer" as a prelude to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

[1] Peter's Leadership 1:15

Matthew 16:18-19 Tells of Peter's leadership. What a difference that John 21:16-22 made. After Peter's three denials during Jesus' trial, on the shores of Galilee Jesus gave Peter an opportunity for three affirmations of love for Jesus, His church, and His mission. Jesus' first and last words to Peter were the both the same, Mk 1:17, Jn: 21:22 "*Follow Me.*"

Now he was taking leadership in selecting new leadership. We find out, as seen especially in John 6:66-71, that there were more than twelve who followed Jesus,

[2] Apostolic Succession 1:16-23

Requirement of having been with Jesus through his entire public ministry. The title of apostle came from Luke 6:13 ... *he chose twelve of them whom He also named apostles* (sent ones); and John 20:21 *As the Father has sent me, so send I you.* The apostles became *eyewitnesses* (2 Peter 1:16).

They were all "*sent ones.*" Jesus was a "*sent one.*" Hebrews 3:1 *Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.*

Are there apostles today? No. Does God still call people to go as sent ones? Yes. We usually call them missionaries, evangelists, apologists, church planters or pastors. God is still calling and sending leaders for his church and is still giving his charisma gifts to heal or cast out demons to some today (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11). Some who go to unreached people groups to preach the gospel or who plant new churches, would call their work apostolic ministry.

God would call another apostle, Saul also known as Paul. Romans 1:1 *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.* Signs of an apostle 2 Cor. 12:2 ... *demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.* There were others who were called apostles 1 Thes. 2:6 ..we could have asserted our authority as apostles .. (Silas).

To be an apostle you had to walk with Jesus during His incarnation. What does that say about Paul? Was he formerly one of those annoying Pharisees who followed Jesus to find evidence to plot against and kill him? From persecutor to proclaimer of the gospel.

[3] Twelfth Apostle Chosen out of Prayer 1:24-26

Jesus prayed before selecting the twelve disciples Luke 6:12 He spent all night in prayer to God. Prayer to discern the will of God is key to making leadership decisions. Out of prayer Matthias was chosen.