**The Book of Acts Sermon I**

**Jesus’ Mission: Our Mission**

Theme of Acts:

There is not so much a single theme, as there are multiple themes or lines to the story, as this is an historical document.

The themes are mostly established in the first chapter.

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the Church. Acts 1:2, 1:4-5, 1:7, 1:16

II. The Kingdom of God revealed. Acts 1:3, 1:6

III. The growth and development of the Church. 1:8

Timeline

AD 30 Pentecost Acts 2

32 Church Scattered after Stephen martyred. Acts 8:1-3

33 or 34 Conversion of Saul/Paul Acts 9:1-22

about 37 First Gentiles baptized. Acts 10-11:18

42 or 43 Barnabas joins Paul in Antioch. Acts 11:22-24

45-47 Paul’s first missionary journey Acts 13-14

48 Council in Jerusalem. Acts 15 (14 years after Paul’s conversion)

48-52 Paul’s second missionary Journey (end fixed by Gallio’s

proconsulship) Acts 16-18:22

52-57 Paul’s third missionary journey Acts 18:23-Acts 21:16

57 Paul arrested in Jerusalem

57-59 Paul a prisoner in Caesarea

60-62 Paul a prisoner in Rome Book of Acts ends.

62 Probably freed. Went to Spain?

65 (?) Martyrdom in Rome

Luke: Jesus goes to Jerusalem.

Acts: Jesus goes out from Jerusalem (through his apostles)

**I. Acts and Jesus**

Acts 1:1 All Jesus began to do and to teach. Here we see that Jesus is still a major character in Acts. Jesus continues to work in Acts.

Examples:

He works miracles: Acts 3:6,10,30, Acts 9:34, Acts 13:11, Acts 14:3.

He is seen at God’s right hand Acts 7:55-56.

He appears to Saul Acts 9:4-5.

He speaks to Ananias Acts 9:10-16.

He tells Peter to go to Cornelius’ house Acts 10:13-15.

He comforts Paul and Silas in prison Acts 18:9-10.

He sends Paul to preach to the Gentiles Acts 22:17-21.

He tells Paul he must go to Rome in chains Acts 23:11

This is Jesus’ church. Matthew 28:20 I will be with you always.

As we go through Acts, be mindful of Jesus in the background

**II. Even more so, we see the Holy Spirit acting and controlling events in Acts.**  This is the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent.

Acts of the Apostles could very well be called Acts of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:2 Jesus gave instruction through the Holy Spirit.

1:4-5 Wait for the Holy Spirit.

1:7 Power from the Holy Spirit.

1:16 The Holy Spirit spoke the prophecies

2:1-4 The Holy Spirit falls on the apostles.

2:17-18 Pouring of the Holy Spirit prophesied in Joel.

4:8 Peter spoke, as he was filled by the Holy Spirit.

4:25 He spoke through David.

4:31 They were filled with the Holy Spirit and the house was shaken.

5:32 The Holy Spirit witnesses to the resurrection.

6:3-6 Those known to be full of the Holy Spirit chosen to lead.

7:55 Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit.

8:29 The Holy Spirit tells Philip to share with the Ethiopian Eunuch.

9:31 The Church strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit.

10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Peter to go with the three Gentile visitors.

10:44-47 The Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his house (confirming that salvation was for the Gentiles too).

11:28 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus about a famine in the Roman world.

13:2-4 The Holy Spirit set apart Barnabas and Saul for missionary work, and sends them off.

13:52 The disciples filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

15:28 The Holy Spirit influenced the decision of the Jerusalem Council.

16:7 The Spirit of Jesus prevents them from going to Bithyia.

20:22 Paul compelled by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem.

20:23 The Holy Spirit warns Paul of danger.

20:28 The Holy Spirit makes and chooses elders.

21:11 The Holy Spirit tells Agabus how Paul will die.

Today: Jesus’ Mission: Our Mission Bear in mind that the Holy Spirit empowers us and guides us as we put into effect Jesus’ mission.

**III. Acts and the Kingdom of God.**

Acts 1:3 What was Jesus talking about? The Kingdom of God.

Acts 2:17-21 The Kingdom comes, as prophesied in the OT.

Acts 10 The Kingdom comes to the Gentiles.

Acts 8:12 Philip proclaims the Kingdom

Acts 14:22 We are on our way into the kingdom of God

Acts 19:8 He persuaded them about the kingdom of God.

Acts 20:25 Paul preached everywhere about the Kingdom of God.

**IV. Acts as a story of the growth and development of the Church and the spread of the gospel.**

Acts 1:8 A scary vision. Yet, that is what they did.

Acts is not just a series of nice, unconnected stories. It is a record of a movement which, in the end, completely, absolutely, totally, forever, changed the world. It is hard for us to imagine how much they changed the future course of human (and eternal) history.

Growth of the Church in Acts.

Acts 2:41 Three thousand added that day.

Acts 4:4 The number of disciples grew to five thousand.

Acts 5:14 More and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

Acts 5:28 You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching.

Acts 6:7 The number of disciples increased rapidly and a large number of priests were obedient.

Acts 8:4 Those scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 9:31 The Church grew in numbers throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria.

Acts 11:24 a great number of people were brought to the Lord.

Acts 16:5 the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.

Acts 17:6 These men have caused trouble all over the world. (completing stage 4 of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth)

Now our sermon! Acts 1 Jesus’ Mission: Our Mission.

Acts 1:1-8 Jesus makes last preparations for his disciples to carry on the work. To be all in. How?

a. v. 3 Teaching about the kingdom. (v. 6 but they are really confused)

b. v. 4-5 Wait for the gift. Sending the Holy Spirit to help them.

c. v. 8 Giving them a vision/mission.

1:8 Luke’s Great Commission: A scary vision!!!!

The Roman Empire was an amalgam of an ancient polytheism, local gods, Greek philosophies (Pytharorean, Epicurean, Stoic, Neoplatonist), Gnosticism, Greek, Egyptian and Persian Mystery religions and Persian dualist religions.

Logically, it makes absolutely no sense that a Jewish movement, led mostly by poor, uneducated people, from a relatively insignificant province in the Roman empire, with a world view diametrically opposed to that of the Roman/Greek world, following a leader who was executed at a young age—one who never wrote anything and who never left a 100 mile radius of his place of birth, who did not even speak Greek or Latin could conquer the entire Greco/Roman world.

This is what we need today. The only hope for this world is for us to change the world all over again. We need a new revolution like that we find in Acts.

Truly, God did amazing things in their days, but he can do the same today. Do you want to be part of this?

To do this, they had to overcome great prejudice.

Acts Ch 3-7 They reach Jerusalem stage #1.

Then God asked the Jews to do something they were NOT inclined to do. To go to Samaria and the ends of the world required them to do things they were not at all comfortable doing. It broke every stereotype and preconceived notion about the specialness of the Jewish people they had.

Acts 8:4-5 Acts 8:2 A persecution breaks out and God scatters the church.

Philip preaches in Samaria.

Now the unclean half-Jewish Samaritans hear the word of God.

A Jewish Prayer: Thank you God that you did not make me a woman or a Samaritan!

In going from Galilee to Jerusalem, the Jews went around Samaria.

The Jews (including the apostles and the disciples) hated the Jews and did not think them worthy of the kingdom.

But Philip preaches in Samaria.

Acts 8:26-29

v. 26 An angel tells Philip to go.

v. 29 The Holy Spirit told him to go. Praise God an angel and the Holy Spirit intervened here, otherwise Philip would not have done this. Why?

The Ethiopian eunuch is probably a Jewish convert (not born Jewish).

He was barely more Jewish than a Samaritan.

Worse than that, he was a eunuch.

Eunuchs were “unclean.” Philip has to reach out to and hop in a chariot with an unclean person.

An angel told him to do it!!! Will you go and bring the gospel to “unclean” people? (Spanish speaker, homeless, gay person, old, young…)

Will you go to uncomfortable places and people?

We have completed stage 2: Judea and Samaria. But that is not all!

Acts 10 Now Gentiles will come into the church. God had said dozens of times, through Abraham ALL NATIONS will be blessed. But the church does not want to do this. They did not get it.

We can read the Bible our whole lives and NOT GET IT.

Acts 10:9-16 Peter has three visions.

v. 13 GOD says “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.

And Peter says to the God of the universe. “Surely not!!!”

Acts 10:19 The Holy Spirit tells Paul to go with Cornelius’ men.

Acts 10:44 While Peter was still speaking.

The Holy Spirit interrupted his sermon in the middle!!!

Finally Acts 10:47-48 OK. I guess we better baptize Gentiles.

God sent Peter to an uncomfortable place. Aren’t you glad he went?

Last episode.

Acts 28:1,4 The barbarians. These are not Jews. They are not half-Jewish Samaritans. They are not unclean Jewish converts. They are not civilized Greco-Roman converts. They are barbarians.

But what are these barbarians doing for a ship-load of dangerous criminals?

These barbarians showed unusual kindness. They built a fire, welcomed them, took them into their homes.

This is a sort of re-enactment of the Parable of the Good Samaritan.

The story of the good barbarians.

At the end of acts, the church had not yet reached the “barbarians.”

Acts 28 is a sort of foreshadowing of the church reaching, literally, all nations, daring great danger, crossing every barrier—language, economic, culture, prejudice.

What about you?

What is the moral of the story? God is sending us out.

God is empowering us with the Holy Spirit.

But when he says go into all the world—to the ends of the earth—he is quite serious.

Who do you hesitate to share with? A rich person? A Sikh person? A gay person?

Who is the “barbarian” in your life?

Let us take the good news to the very ends of the earth, including Bakersfield, Tehachapi, Taft, Delano, McFarland, Shafter and, yes, to Merced.

**The Book of Acts Sermon II**

**The Holy Spirit Sounds the Starting Gun**

Themes of Acts:

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the Church.

II. The Kingdom of God revealed.

III. The growth and development of the Church.

Luke: Jesus goes to Jerusalem.

Acts: Jesus goes out from Jerusalem (through his apostles)

Acts 1:8 A scary vision. But Acts is the story of this actually happening.

The Roman Empire was an amalgam of an ancient polytheism, local gods, Greek philosophies (Pytharorean, Epicurean, Stoic, Neoplatonist), Gnosticism, Greek, Egyptian and Persian Mystery religions and Persian dualist religions.

Logically, it makes absolutely no sense that a Jewish movement, led mostly by poor, uneducated people, from a relatively insignificant province in the Roman empire, with a world view diametrically opposed to that of the Roman/Greek world, following a leader who was executed at a young age—one who never wrote anything and who never left a 100 mile radius of his place of birth, who did not even speak Greek or Latin could conquer the entire Greco/Roman world.

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The Ethiopian eunuch is probably a Jewish convert

Worse than that, he was a eunuch—which means he was unclean.

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Finally Acts 10:47-48 OK. I guess we better baptize Gentiles.

Acts 28:1,4 The barbarians. These are not Jews. They are not half-Jewish Samaritans. They are not unclean Jewish converts. They are not civilized Greco-Roman converts. They are barbarians.

Back to Acts 1:8 Jesus says “you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Then….

Acts 1:9-11. The ascension. Imagine the scene!!!

Great. Now what?

An angel tells them: He will come back the way he went. So, don’t just stand there. Get about his business.

This is not the end. This is the beginning.

Now the process of spreading the Gospel “in Jerusalem.” begins

Q: What does he mean, “Jesus… will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven?”

Matthew 24:30-31

Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. He will send out his angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to another.

Q: What does this mean for us?

We should live our lives as if Jesus just might come back tomorrow. What would you do if you thought that Jesus was coming back tomorrow or next week? What if today was the last day of your life?

You would stop what you are doing and try to bring the lost across the finish line.

We should also live our lives as if he will not come back during our lifetime. How would you live in that case?

You would try to leave the church in the best possible shape so that it can be strong in the long run. You would build carefully.

Acts 1:13-26 Matthias chosen to replace Judas. They cast lots. We are not covering this.

Acts 2 The Church begins. The Holy Spirit Sounds the Starting Gun.

Some have described Acts 2 as the hub (ie hub of a wheel) of the Bible.

It is the essential turning point. It is the initiation of God’s final plan. Everything God had planned from the beginning is now in place.

There is before Pentecost……. And there is after Pentecost.

The final act of God to bring about his plan is completed. The “last days” have now begun (Acts 2:17). This is the starting gun for the church and a new chapter in the history of the kingdom of God.

The Day of Pentecost. This is one of the three great feast-days when Jews would come from all over the world to worship. (also Passover and Day of Atonement)

It is called Pentecost because it comes 50 days after Passover.

Why Pentecost?

1. Tens of thousands of Jews from all over the Near East are in Jerusalem for this event.

2. Because the Jewish festival Pentecost was a prefigure of the Day of Pentecost. Pentecost was a celebration of the harvest. This event is the beginning of the harvest of souls for eternity.

Every baptism is a reenactment of the Day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:1-14

This is why there was a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It was a great fanfare for the greatest event in history—the offering of salvation to mankind. All of salvation history pointed to this momentous event.

Acts 2:14-21

Notice, as predicted by Jesus in Matthew 16:19, Peter is given the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Peter unlocks the door.

Peter: No, we are not drunk. This is the fulfillment of God’s prophecies about his kingdom.

Spoken of by Joel

I told you that this great “Day of the Lord” will come with

v. 18 an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Well, it is here! The “last days” have begun.

v. 21 The plan of salvation of our God is now complete.

All nations!!!! (Isaiah 2)

Acts 2:22-35 The first gospel sermon.

Outline:

1. Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah.

2. Jesus did unprecedented signs, wonders and miracles.

“As you yourselves know.”

3. You killed him, but this was God’s plan.

4. Besides, God raised him from the dead!

5. Repent and be baptized into Christ.

(This is the Jesus Bible Study Series we use)

v. 25-35 Peter quotes OT prophecies predicting resurrection of Messiah.

Acts 2:36-41

v. 36 Do you understand that you crucified Christ?

You spit on him, mocked him, scourged him, beat him, and you pounded nails into his wrists and ankles.

You did this to God’s Son!

v. 36 But God was behind this whole plan.

What will you do about this?

v. 36 Who did we crucify? The Lord. The Messiah—Savior/Anointed One.

Q: Is Jesus your Savior? (very popular)

Is he you Lord? (not so popular)

If he is not Lord, he definitely is not Savior.

v. 37 Here is what you should do: You should say to God, “Brothers, what shall we do?”

Is this you? Have you surrendered to God. Have you given your life to him?

Are you “All in?”

So, if you understand that you are responsible for the death of Jesus—that he died because of YOUR sin.

If you recognize that the only means of salvation is in Christ.

If you are willing, right here and now, to make him the Lord of your life.

Then what should you do?

Pray Jesus into your heart?

Say the Sinner’s prayer?

Ask for forgiveness?

Ask Jesus into your heart? NO!!!!!

v. 38 Two things:

Repent metanoeo Change of mind/change of understanding.

Be baptized baptizo Gr. be immersed.

Then God does two things:

Forgiven of sins

Receive the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:14 “who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the [final] redemption of those who are God’s possession.)

That is it! It is simple and not hard to figure out.

v. 39 Q: Who does this apply to?

A: For all people for all time.

v. 40 Don’t wait. Put this corrupt generation behind you. Repent and be baptized. Save yourself.

Luke sees salvation not as a thing for the future, but something that is real right now. We are not just saved from hell. We are saved from living a corrupt and meaningless life NOW.

v. 41 Three thousand were “added to their number.” To whose number? To the church.

The Holy Spirit has sounded the starting gun for people to enter the kingdom of God.

Have you joined that race? Let us call others to join us in the kingdom of God.

Recognize Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God

Realize that, because of our rebellion and sin, we crucified Christ.

Be cut to the heart

Repent and be baptized

You can join the Holy Spirit’s army today.

**Acts Sermon #3**

**The All-In Church**

Acts 2:42-47 This is a picture of the ideal Christian church—one composed of people who had personally witnessed Jesus and one led by the apostles. A paradigmatic church. A model church.

Let us look carefully at this church and ask ourselves how well we fit this ideal model.

What characterized this All-In church?

Acts 2:42 Worship is the first thing mentioned. Worship is important.

Their worship was composed of four things:

The Apostle’s teaching

The Fellowship

The Breaking of Bread

Prayer

1. the apostle’s teaching.

Our worship ought to include declaration of the Word of God. Preaching (and teaching).

Like Paul said to 2 Timothy 4:1-5 We need to preach the word, whether people like what they hear or not.

Are you willing to hear strong Bible-based preaching and teaching?

That’s what we are going to do around here.

v. 3 This time has already come. In many churches preaching repentance is not popular. Teaching God’s view of marriage and divorce and sexual purity will empty the pews!

Calling people to live the fully devoted life of a disciple will have the same result it had when Jesus did the same.

Are you looking to have your ears itched? It’s OK. You are good. You don’t need to be that committed.

We are going to passionately teach God’s love and his grace (which everyone likes to hear) and also call people to biblical discipleship/commitment and to repent of sin (which itching ears do not like to hear).

We will even preach and teach about judgment at times. Very unpopular.

Are you OK with that?

Itching ears want to hear:

That’s for the “disciples,” but not for regular Christians.

A “modern” tithe is 5%.

Living together? God’s grace covers that.

Like Paul said in Romans 6:1 Shall we sin that grace may increase? Heaven forbid.

As for us, we will continue to preach the Word!

2. fellowship

The early church hung out together.

v. 46 Every day they continued to meet together. Every day!!!

We only meet 2-1/2 times per week (plus discipling time)

We need more than that! (not more formal meetings)

v. 46 They had meals together in their homes. Is this something you do? (breaking bread in their homes is an idiom for sharing meals together, whereas “to the breaking of bread” is the Lord’s supper)

A Jesus church is one in which lives are shared together. Quiet times together, picnics, barbecues. Double dates with other members. Does your BT meet outside of BT night?

Me in Boulder. I became the super-fellowshipper, so they gave me the keys.

3. breaking of bread (sharing the Lord’s supper). Many churches (not to be named) do the Lord’s supper 1/month or even less. We need to remember Jesus on a regular basis. Early church: did this weekly.

(but I am not spending a lot of time on this now)

4. prayer. We did a late night prayer last week. We had about 20 there. That’s good but… That’s not good enough!!!!

More of you should have been there.

We need to pray TOGETHER.

Let’s look at one of the group prayers that they had:

Acts 4:23-31

Notice this: They raised their voices together in prayer to God.

They prayed for boldness. They prayed for God to act to intervene.

The place was shaken.

We need this. Your Bible group needs to meet from time to time to pray together. Prayer in worship is good, but not enough.

Keep your finger in Acts 4.

Another example:

Acts 12:25-13:3

The church had a big decision to make.

They fasted and prayed.

The Holy Spirit intervened

Q: How did this work? Did a note fall from the sky.

No!!! When we pray, expecting God to speak, he will speak to us.

As a church, we have some big decisions coming up:

Interns this summer?

Couple to replace Jan and me.

Do you want God to be involved? We need to pray TOGETHER.

We need to be a church like the church in Jerusalem. If so, then I guarantee the need will be met.

Let’s have faith!!!

We have talked about worship. What about church life more generally. What was that like?

Back to Acts 2:

v. 44-45 Needs were met. Gal 6:10 Let us do good to all, but especially to those in the church family. We do not need to be embarrassed that we take care of our own first.

v. 46 They ate together. Superbowl parties, March madness parties, birthday parties, started dating parties, got a promotion parties.

The church should be the funnest place in town.

Yeah, we hear and apply strong preaching, but we also enjoy one another.

Let’s continue to Acts 4:32-37

They were a true family.

All needs were met. Even homes and land were sold.

“Back in the day” of our movement this was commonplace for our special contributions.

We have a special contribution coming up in the end of June to help this church to grow and to help hire interns and a new ministry couple.

And I am hoping you will be able to help, at least a bit, with the Merced planting.

Will anyone rise up like Barnabas did? (v. 36-37)

Donate their tax refund.

We have two families who have done just that! I wish I could name them.

What is your worship life like? What is your church life like?

Preaching/teaching of the Bible. No itching-ear scratching!!!

Blow-away fellowship

Great worship with singing, fasting, the Lord’s Supper

Prayer. Group prayer. Time devoted to group prayer.

Church life? Needs met, meals eaten together, financial sacrifices made.

What will be the result?

Acts 2:47 The Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Can you catch this vision?

At first, they were very well received, and they grew rapidly.

Acts 4 The beginning of persecution.

4:1-7 What were they preaching? The resurrection!

Next sermon: Persecution!

**Acts Sermon #4 Acts 20**

**Paul’s Farewell Sermon**

**Acts 20 Paul addresses the Ephesian elders.**

Ephesus was Paul’s favorite church.

He had spent three years there—more than any other church.

He had left Timothy—his right hand guy there to lead the church.

From Ephesus “All the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia head the word of the Lord.” (Acts 19:10)

Acts 20:17-38 is Luke’s most careful and thorough description of Paul’s ministry. It is Paul’s farewell address to the church he held most dear. It is a bit like Matthew 28:18-20 or Acts 1:3-8 for Jesus. We should pay very careful attention to this passage, which is one of the most important in the book.

20:18 You know how I lived in the province of Asia…. Q: How did Paul live? Let it challenge you.

Imagine, at the end of your life being able to say to those who knew you well, “You know how I lived.”

Could you say this? How have you lived?

How did Paul live his life?

Gave up the right to a family and a career. 1 Cor 9:1, 12-18

2 Cor 11:23-29

Coll 1:28-29 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all the energy with which Christ so powerfully works in me.”

This is my goal: that at the end of my life I could say with a sincere face, “You know how I have lived.”

What would that look like for you?

v. 19 I served the Lord with great humility… Imagine having served with such humility that people would say of you, “She lived with great humility.”

Imagine being able to look at those you had ministered to in the eyes and make this bold statement. “I served the Lord with great humility.

There is serving with humility—sufficient that others would say that about you.

Then there is serving with SUCH humility that you can say it yourself.

Is this what your ministry is like?

What was Paul’s ministry like that he could say this?

Paul endured the worst sort of insults from Jews and even from Judaizing Christians. He worked for a living when he certainly deserved to be prayed to preach.

He gave up the right to have children and a wife in order to plant churches.

What does a life lived with that kind of humility look like?

How would you have to change in order to be able to say this?

Could you say to your friends: I have served you with great humility?

v. 19 and with tears…. Note the passion of Paul for those he ministered to. Have you cried for those you minister to? What were these tears about?

Are you passionate like Paul?

Paul’s ministry: 1 Thess 2:5-12. Let us be challenged by this. Paul gave himself to those he was ministering to. v. 7 Like a mother…. V. 11 Like a father…. Sometimes we must minister like a mother, sometimes like a father.

v. 20-21 What did Paul preach? Repentance and faith. Which is harder to call people to????? Biblical repentance or biblical faith?

Are you calling people in your life to repentance and of faith?

Where did he do this? Publicly and from house to house.

v. 22-23 Q: Why to Jerusalem? (because the Holy Spirit told him) What was he expecting there? (v. 23 prison and hardships)

Paul’s attitude: If that is where God is sending me, then so be it.

Paul wanted to preach to the powerful in Rome. The only plan he could think of was to go to Jerusalem and get himself arrested, so he could be sent to Rome in chains.

What would you be willing to do to see the gospel spread?

v. 24 I consider my life worth nothing. What was Paul holding on to? Nothing. All of his value came from God. How did it affect Paul to feel this way? Imagine how freeing it is to put your life totally in God’s hands. If only we could do this!!!!!

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Q: How can you move in a direction to be more like Paul in this?

[If time, Phil 3:4-11]

v. 25-27 How could Paul feel “innocent of the blood of all men.”? Had he literally shared with everyone? No! But he had made the most of every opportunity “to proclaim to you the whole will of God.”

Can you look at your family and make this declaration?

Can you look at your classmates or co-workers or neighbors and declare yourself before them to be “innocent of the blood of all men.”?

What part of God’s will do you hesitate to preach?

v. 28-35 advice to shepherds….

v. 28-31 Protect against false teaching and false Christians.

You are not in it for selfish ends.

v. 32-35 Do not seek financial gain, and do not only hang out with the “sharp”

Be willing to help the weak and the vulnerable.

Paul’s advice to shepherds is very similar to that in Ezekiel 34. Shepherd/take care of my flock.

v. 36-38 A final extremely emotional farewell.

I am starting to feel just a bit like this myself.

You know how I have lived.

I served with great humility.

I served with tears.

I preached repentance and faith.

I consider my life worth nothing.

Let us strive to be like Paul in our ministry.

**Acts Sermon V**

**Why Shouldn’t I Be Baptized?**

Acts 8:1-4 After the persecution which was the result of Stephen’s martyrdom, God forced the Church to begin doing what he had told them to do in Acts 1:8. I love v. 4.

Those who were scattered throughout Arvin, Weedpatch, Bakersfield, Delano, McFarland, Lamont and Shafter (oh, and Merced) preached the word wherever they went.

We are going to look at three places they went.

I. Acts 8:5-24 Philip went to Samaria.

These are Samaritans! (obviously). Jews do not like Samaritans. Who do you not like? Raider fans? Old people? Young people? Rich people? Homeless people? Hoity Toity people? Tatted people? White collar workers? Blue collar workers?

v. 5 Philip proclaimed the Messiah there. Q: Have you proclaimed the Messiah wherever you go?

Lots of miracles happened, and even Simon the Sorcerer believed.

(Later, in the 2nd century, the church that this guy, also known as Simon Magus, became the first Gnostic teacher)

v. 12 They were baptized. v. 13 Even Simon was baptized

Acts 2:38 What can we assume they did before they were baptized? (repent).

Then, what can we assume God did for them after they repented and were baptized? (forgiven of their sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit)

This is the “one baptism” of Ephesians 4:5.

This is the act referred to in Acts 5:32 … and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

OK, so what about Acts 8:14-17 v. 16 OK, what is going on here. I am confused!

Acts and the Holy Spirit: Three phenomena

1. The miraculous pouring out of the Holy Spirit/baptism of the Holy Spirit, as prophesied by John the Baptist (Matthew 3:11 He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit) Joel (Joel 2:28-32 And afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all people) and Jesus (Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you).

These prophecies were fulfilled in Acts 2 and Acts 10. This was a one-off (or two-off) event given by God as a declaration of the coming of the Kingdom of God to Jew and Gentile.

It was an act of God. It was spontaneous, and it was not the result of anything that any human did. It is not an act of obedience a la Acts 5:32.

2. The promised gift of the Holy Spirit which is a deposit, guaranteeing our salvation until the coming of Jesus (2 Cor 5:5, Eph 1:13-14), which is received by the “one baptism” (Ephesians 4:4-5). Acts 2:36-41, Acts 5:32, Acts 19:1-7.

a. This is the only aspect of the Holy Spirit which is ever promised to Christians in general.

b. It is the one received upon obedience to the command to repent and be baptized.

3. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, given by the laying on of hands of the apostles.

From Acts 8:14-18 we know that these gifts were given by the laying on of hands of apostles. This is specified in Acts 8:18.

Another nearly identical example: Acts 19:4-7 Also, 2 Tim 1:6, Hebrews 2:4 (these miracles testify to the message of salvation).

Some teach that the receipt of such gifts is the real sign of our salvation. This is not biblical. There is no general promise to believers that they will receive such miraculous gifts. There is no promise anywhere in the Bible that Christians will be given miraculous gifts.

Rem: Those who were scattered preached the word wherever they went.

II. Acts 8:26-40 Philip, through the eunuch, went to Ethiopia. Ethiopian Eunuch baptized. Now the gospel is spreading to Ethiopia!

Actually, ancient Ethiopia was probably in the area west of the Red Sea, in present-day Sudan where the Kandake, also known as Candace ruled.

Ethiopia is one of the very earliest churches!

The Eunuch was probably a convert (proselyte) to Jerusalem. To the Jew he would be considered “unclean” because he was a eunuch.

v. 26 Philip is listening to the voice of God and to the Holy Spirit, sharing the gospel.

v. 29 I like this line: The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

Go get in that line at the grocery store.

Go sign up for Hist 110 so you can meet Emily

Go, buy that house, as you will be converting your neighbor.

He is looking for an “open” person. But the eunuch would not fit any Jewish person’s idea of an “open” person.

Rich, powerful, African, a eunuch, not a full Jew,

But guess what, God had prepared his heart. In fact, he was reading from Isaiah 53.

Q: Who will be your Ethiopian Eunuch?

Note: v. 30 He ran up to the chariot. I love that!

v. 34 “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about.

v. 35 Philip preached the good news about Jesus. What did this include? Probably Acts 2:14-41!

Jesus fulfilled prophecy (Isaiah 53)

Jesus worked fantastic signs, wonders and miracles

You (with the help of wicked men) put him to death

But God raised him from the dead.

You need to repent and be baptized. (we know he taught that! v. 36)

Side note: Some teach that baptism is sprinkling. OK, then why did they get down from the chariot, got down into the water and then come back up out of the water? (8:38)

Those who were scattered…

III. Acts 9:1-19, Acts 22:3-21 and Acts 26:12-18.

This is truly one of the most remarkable personal transformations in history. Paul was an amazing man in his own right. A Hebrew of Hebrews.” “Pharisee of Pharisees” (Phil 3:5). He studied under Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), the most famous Rabbi of his day. The most zealous man of his day (Phil 3:6). A man clearly of conviction. He was an extremely sincere Jew. A very persuasive speaker (Acts 9:22 He powerfully proved that Jesus was the Christ). Being from Tarsus (southeastern Turkey) he spoke good Greek.

We can see why God chose Saul.

But…. Acts 9:1-2

But… Did he seem like a good candidate for conversion?

Would you have shared with Saul?

Q: Who would be the hardest imaginable person for you to share with?

Possibly he was actually open, despite all appearances. Why? Because he had personally witnessed the conviction of Stephen and others. Paul was attracted to “The Way.”

9:2 Christianity is called “the Way” Christianity is not merely a religion—a list of prescribed rites and a list of dos and don’ts, it is a way of Life. It is a way of living.

Acts 9:3-5

Actually, let’s read Acts 22:6-16

Paul believed in Jesus 22:7

Paul has confessed Jesus as Lord in 22:8

Paul has repented and begun obeying in 22:10-11

But when were his sins forgiven, and when did he receive the Holy Spirit?

Acts 22:16.

We have some here today who are studying the Bible. To you I say, “And now, what are you waiting for?

You know that Jesus fulfilled prophecy.

You know that Jesus worked incredible miracles.

You know that, because of your sin, you are responsible for his death on the cross.

You know that despite your having killed Jesus, God raised him from the dead.

You are cut to the heart.

So what should you do?

“And now what are you waiting for? Get up, get out of your chariot, get down into the stream and be baptized, so that God can wash your sins away.

If time: Acts 9:17-22 Paul proved that Jesus is the Messiah, and many were saved.

Acts 9:31 Acts 1:8 part II You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea and Samaria…

Acts 10 Phase III begins.

**Acts Sermon VI**

**Paul Speaks Before Kings**

Background:

Remember Acts 20 Paul speaks to the Ephesian Elders.

Acts 20:22 An now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me: my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.

I can relate as Jan and I go to Merced.

Additionally: Acts 21:10-14 It is clear what is happening, but like Jesus, Paul must go to Jerusalem, where he will be arrested.

Remember—Paul’s plan was to speak before kings, and to go to Rome. The best plan he could come up with is to go to Jerusalem, where he would be arrested, and then he would appeal to Caesar, so he could go to Rome and even speak before the rulers of the empire.

**CH 21 On to Jerusalem**

There is irony because Luke: Jesus going from Jerusalem

Acts: Jesus, in the form of the church, goes out from Jerusalem. Acts 1:8 You will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to all the world.

But here, near the end of his mission, Paul is returning to Jerusalem.

A very quick summary of Acts 21, 22.

Paul arrives in Jerusalem, bringing money for the Jerusalem churches from across Asia, Macedonia and Achaia (Greece).

To do this, he plans on entering the temple grounds.

But there are many Jewish Christians who are zealous for the law. They are not so happy that Paul is bringing Gentiles into the church.

So, Paul makes a special vow of purity and goes through a series of ritual cleansing with four Jewish men to shave their heads, etc.

Like Paul said in 1 Cor 9. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews.

But as Paul enters the temple area, he is falsely accused of bringing Gentiles into the court of (Jewish) men at the temple.

A riot ensues, Paul is arrested and falsely accused of teaching Jews to stop obeying the Law of Moses.

In Acts 22, Paul defends himself (remember the last sermon when he recalls Ananias had told him, “And now, what are you waiting for, get up and be baptized, and wash your sins away.”

At the end of his defense, Paul tells them that God told him to take the gospel to the Gentiles.

A second riot starts!!!

Paul put in prison for his own safety.

Paul defends himself before the Sanhedrin. He starts a riot by saying “I am on trial because of the hope of the resurrection.

This starts a huge argument between the Pharisees and the Saducees.

Acts 23:11

Then the Jews (not Christian Jews) plot to murder Paul, so he is sent to Caesarea for his own safety to stand trial.

**Acts 24 Paul preaches to Felix—to a pagan ruler.**

Paul before Felix, Festus and Herod Agrippa—two governors and a king—reminds of Matthew 10:17-20 “they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.”

As you read this account, imagine one day you, too will have your moment to share the gospel—maybe not to a king, but to someone really important.

Maybe it will be a principal or a town council or a CEO, or the popular person from your graduating class or a pro football player…

First, Paul speaks before Felix. (I can’t help thinking of Felix the Cat)

**Context**: Marcus Antonius Felix was the Roman procurator of the Judaea Province from 52-60 AD. Felix’s cruelty and licentiousness, coupled with his accessibility to bribes, led to a great increase of crime in Judaea. Tacitus on Felix: he “indulged in every kind of barbarity and lust.”

Acts 24:1-9 Ananias behind all this. The lawyer Tertullus makes his case.

What a hypocrite!!! He gives totally insincere sucking-up sycophantic praises to Felix. “We just want to help you and make your job easier” Liar!!!

Jesus said to be wise as serpents, but harmless as doves. Let us never be like this guy.

His charges are a mixture of

a. lies tried to desecrate the temple

b. half-truths stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world and

c. truths made to look worse than they really were. The “ringleader of this sect”

note the word sect had very negative connotations to the Romans as an unauthorized, rebellious and seditious religious group.

Now Christianity is being called a sect of the Nazarene. The word “sect” is the Greek word *haerisis*, translated into English would be heresy. What is the Jews basic argument? That Paul is teaching a heresy that is not allowed under Jewish and therefore Roman law.

This is how we will be treated by the likes of Tertullus.

But we are more interested in Paul’s defense.

Acts 24:10-21 Paul’s defense before Felix.

Q: What would you say if you had the opportunity to share and defend your faith before the governor of Judea?

Notice how different his defense is from that of Tertullus. His is a model of our sharing our faith with blatant non-believers, even in the face of persecution from hypocritical religious people.

a. His is respectful and thankful but does not give insincere praise.

b. He refutes the false charges by simply relating the facts, but not in an inflammatory style. He avoids all temptation to cut down Tertullus and Ananias, but prefers to let the truth speak for itself.

c. Where the charges are half-truths, he gives a more accurate description. (v. 14 I follow a way, not a sect, for example)

d. Where the charges are true, he comes fully clean. There was nothing they could charge him with that he did not fully reveal himself. v. 21.

A great Christian model. 2 Cor 7:11 Readiness to see justice done.

Isn’t it great that, as a Christian, we do not have to worry about being blackmailed because there is nothing hidden. When correctly charged with wrongdoing we simply say. Yes, and everyone already knows that.

e. He shows that what he is doing is fully in line with the Old Testament. What we are doing is biblical. Therefore the charge of heresy is totally false (v. 14-15)

f. The ACTUAL purpose of my coming was not to stir up trouble, but to help the poor of Jerusalem. v. 17

f. Most importantly, he shares the gospel with Felix! I follow a risen Lord (v. 21)

Acts 24:24-27 Always the politician (and hoping for a bribe, v 26), Felix refuses to give a decision.

He presumably has nothing but contempt for the suck-up Tertullus and Ananias but he has to be profoundly impressed with Paul’s sincerity, openness and honesty. People are not stupid.

Let us pray for such a moment

24:24-27 Paul shares the gospel with Felix.

v. 25 Will there ever be a “convenient time” to repent of our sins and put our faith in Jesus? We need to point this out to people. 2 Cor 6:2 “Now is the day of salvation.”

“Indecision is a decision.”

Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (Acts12:1 who died in AD 44) and sister of Herod Agrippa II. She had married King Aziz of Emesa but Felix had recently seduced her from him.

Is it any surprise then that Felix would fear the teachings about righteousness and also was waiting for a bribe? In the end, Felix never released Paul even though he had concluded that Paul was innocent. Felix was more content with comfort, pleasure, power and appearance than righteousness.

**Acts Ch 25-26 Paul before Festus and Herod Agrippa**

Acts 25:9-12 A fateful moment. Paul appeals to Caesar. His 20+ year desire is about to be fulfilled (although not exactly the way he might have pictured it). He is going to Rome.

Would you be willing to go to prison in order to have the opportunity to share your faith in a foreign country?

Roman Festus to King Agrippa. I need to send him with a letter explaining the charges. Like Felix, he understands that Paul is completely innocent (except minor disputes about Jewish laws) You know all about the Jews. Help me out here!

Acts 26 A masterful defense of the Gospel, both to a religious person who knows the Bible and to a total pagan.

The scene:

Herod Agrippa is a client-king and the great grandson of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus. When this event occurred he was in an incestuous relationship with his full sister Bernice. Imagine the gall to appear in public, judging Paul, when he was living this kind of lifestyle.

His “buddy” is Festus with whom he shares control of the Jews.

Acts 25:23 Agrippa enters in great pomp.

Paul, the greatest living man at the time, enters, probably in chains.

Acts 26:1 Does Paul really feel fortunate to stand before Agrippa? YES!!! He is sharing his faith with a king. It was all worth it!!!

Acts 26:2-32 (skip v. 12-18)

v. 4-5 Paul: My life has always been exemplary and above reproach, as my enemies are fully aware.

v. 6 I am on trial because I love God. (a good reason for a Christian to be in trouble)

v. 7-8 I am on trial because I believe in the resurrection, as promised by God.

v. 7, 22-23 I am on trial for observing faithfully the Old Testament.

v. 9-11 Like you, Agrippa, I was not predisposed to believe in Jesus—far from it!

v. 20 The real reason I am on trial is because I preach repentance. “That is why the Jews seized me.”

Note, Paul is putting Herod Agrippa in this position. Herod: I called you to repentance, and now you are trying to kill me rather than repent.

At the end of our interactions with people, at least we can have all the cards on the table. (unlike with Texas hold-em. Right, Joe?)

v. 24 Festus: You are crazy!!!! When people have no logical response they turn to insults.

v. 25-27 Paul: What I am saying is true, and it is reasonable. If you do not believe me, just ask Agrippa. He will tell you.

I love this. What we believe is true, and it is reasonable. We have nothing to be ashamed of. Jesus fulfilled prophecy. Jesus worked miracles, and Jesus was raised from the dead.

v. 27 Paul to Agrippa: Do you want to go to heaven? If you have read the prophets, surely you know that Jesus is the Messiah.

v. 28 Agrippa finally gets it. Paul is trying to convert me. Duhhh….

v. 29 A beautiful appeal. The prisoner says to the king, “I would not trade places with you for the world.”

Paul is going to Rome.

Hopefully, if you hold out the gospel to people, and if you live righteously for God, one day you will have your moment to speak before kings.

Get a picture in your mind right now. Who will it be? Your grandfather? Your boss? A politician? A famous coach? What will you say? Will you preach the gospel and call people to repentance that leads to salvation?

If so, here is what you should do:

1. Be humble and respectful, but do not use flattery.

2. Answer charges with facts, not anger or rhetoric.

3. Put the shoe on the other foot. Let’s talk about why we are really here. It is because I was doing the work of Jesus that we are here.

4. Preach the gospel and call for repentance.