

# *Fellowship with the Spirit ...*

# *Devotional Through the Book of Acts*



Contributed to by the Righteous Men and Friends of  
Christian Life Center, West Chester, Ohio

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# ACTS 1

By **REV. DON ALLEN, JR.**  
**DIRECTOR of RIGHTEOUS MEN'S MINISTRY &**  
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I wrote a great quote about the book of Acts in the margin of my Bible. (But, I neglected to record the author's name.) *"The focus is not merely upon a God who is, but a God who does."*

Clearly the book of Acts sets the stage for greatest religious movement of all time. Christianity would sweep the world within just a few short years and it continues to be *the* life-changing factor. Lives would be radically changed because of the Message that 12 men would start to preach and teach. The message to the disciples/apostles was clear: Go in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit and proclaim the Gospel throughout the World.

However, we notice in verse 11 that the disciples/apostles (like many of us today) needed a nudge to get moving as they stood and looked up into Heaven. The angels asked a great question *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?"* And they gave a great promise, *"The same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (KJV)

The greatest evangelism campaign started with a promise – HE is coming again. The disciples/apostles recalled the memorable words spoken by Jesus just a few minutes earlier *"You shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon; and ye shall be witness unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost part of the earth."* (verse 8)

I personally like the philosophy of the great reform preacher of the 1500's ... Martin Luther, who wrote: "I preach as though Christ was crucified yesterday, rose from the dead today, and is coming back tomorrow." This is the essence of the Acts chapter one.

- Get a hold of God's anointing
- Go and share the Gospel with everyone
- Get ready for His glorious return.

# ACTS CHAPTER 2

## "The Power of God"

Randy D. Rice – Senior Pastor of Christian Life Center

Jesus told His disciples in Acts chapter one that they must wait upon the "power" of the Holy Spirit in order to carry out His mission to the world. In Acts chapter two they received the power that He promised. The word "power" ("dunamis" in the Greek language) is of great importance as we study this chapter.

The word "dunamis" entered the English language when the Swedish chemist and engineer Alfred Bernhard Nobel (1833-96) made the discovery that became his fortune. He discovered a power stronger than anything known up to that time. He asked a friend, who was a Greek scholar, what the word for "explosive power" was in Greek. His friend answered, "Dunamis". So, Nobel called his explosive power "dynamite."

It is important for us to remember that power can be used in at least two ways. It can be unleashed or it can be harnessed. Drop an atomic bomb and just watch as raw power is unleashed. Harness the power of the atom and it will produce enough energy to provide electricity for entire states.

On the Day of Pentecost, and on the day we were filled with the Holy Spirit, the burst of power was evident in our lives, changing us forever into sons of God. But it's the controlled release of the power of the Holy Spirit that will cause, and has caused the people of God to go great distances and affect many lives all over the world, fulfilling the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without the initial power, the controlled release of God's power to change our neighborhoods and the nations will never be accomplished. It's the controlled release of God's power that will help us fulfill His words to preach the gospel to every nation.

As Christians, we can be compared to a reservoir for producing electrical power, like one of those we've seen in canyons out West. When we accept Christ, construction of our reservoir is complete. We now have the potential to be useful to the Lord, and to affect lives with God's power and message of the gospel. But until the flood gates are opened and the cascading river waters pour through, no power is realized. So it is when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit. We open our lives to God and the Holy Spirit pours into us and through us. It is then we become most effective in God's service.

As with the reservoir, this power-generating experience is not intended to be a one-time occurrence. It is to be an ongoing process. When our spiritual power runs low, we need to return to the Source and let the blessed Holy Spirit pour into us again, bringing fresh power.

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Perhaps you are in need of fresh power today? Give yourself to prayer and open your heart to the person of the Holy Spirit. Ask Him to fill you to overflowing. It is then that He will fill your emptiness and give you power to serve Him wherever you are, or wherever He will send you.

## ACTS CHAPTER 3

By Chuck Clevenger,

Acts 3:2 – Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

In the third chapter of Acts, we're introduced to a man who was crippled from birth.

Imagine the joy of having a newborn baby boy and then discovering he is crippled. Think about how difficult his childhood must have been. He couldn't play tag with his boyhood friends. Surely he grew to be an "ineligible" bachelor. His parents' heart must have ached when they considered his future. Being crippled limited his career options; there were so many doors in life that were nailed shut for him.

Yet, he had faith – an expectancy of good things. He could have sat around feeling sorry for himself. He could have committed suicide. He could have given up. Instead, he arranged to have friends carry him daily to the temple to beg for help. Though he was crippled for years, he persisted.

Acts 3 tells the story of how he was healed and his story has inspired millions for thousands of years. At one point, I thought that God used his suffering to inspire others through this story. I felt that encouraged me in my trials to endure. But upon further reflection, I now believe it was his faith – as demonstrated by his daily trip to the temple and his attitude of expectancy (verse 5) – that should be our example.

Despite the circumstances of his life, he believed. Despite the pain, he endured. May we likewise believe and endure to the end. Who knows what may result? Not only will our faith cause us to walk, it may also inspire untold numbers of others.

May God answer our prayers to meet our needs AND to show the world His awesome love and grace!

# ACTS CHAPTER 4

## Answer the CALL

Dan Benton

The events of chapter 4 cannot be considered without remembering chapter 3. The two chapters are so closely connected that one cannot look at them individually. Because of all this activity, the religious leaders became angry and brought Peter and John before the Sanhedrin. The exchange that takes place is classic.

We must recognize the steps taken and be able to apply them in our lives.

First, Peter and John were doing the work of the Lord (Acts 4:1-4). As a result, a man was healed and over 5,000 were brought to Christ. ***Step 1: Do something for God, not just yourself.***

Second, they were arrested for this great event (Acts 4:1). ***Step 2: Remember that some will not like your Christian activities and will try to stop them.***

Third, they had to answer for what had taken place and take a bold stand (Acts 4:5-22). At this point, we must realize these were the same men who had put Jesus to death ***Step 3: Don't be afraid to give an intelligent and Biblical reason for what you are doing.***

Fourth, they assembled together, looked to God, and prayed (Acts 4:23-31). ***Step 4: Fellowship and prayer are a must for God to continue His powerful activities in our lives.***

Fifth, God answers (Acts 4:31). ***Step 5: Expect God to answer your prayers. He will.***

Sixth, God started an amazing move through all of this. ***Step 6: God may be wanting to do an amazing work through you – all he asks is for you to be ready and available.***

God can take the most obscure person and make them a Warrior or Leader. All He needs are those who will answer the Call.

# ACTS 5

Rev. Robert Harper  
Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church Kennedy Heights R

The fifth chapter of Acts tells the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

The saints in the first century church at Jerusalem were selling off parcels of property to be a blessing to other members of their church who were less fortunate. This husband and wife team, Ananias and Sapphira, lied about the amount of money they received for their property. As a result, they died. God dealt with them abruptly and completely. Our Father is a God of discipline. If you are His child, and you are being disobedient, he will chastise you. Their love of money cost them their lives. God "purged the church on the inside." Verse 11 says, "And great fear came upon the church, and upon as many as heard these things."

God works from the inside outward. In constructing the tabernacle, He began in the Holy of Holies and moved outward toward the altar, the laver and the rest of the tabernacle. God has done the same thing with the individual believer. He starts on the inside, in the heart/spirit of man and manifests the changes in the body. Think about it – the most important work that God has to do on His own is on the inside. God purified the first century church from the inside and then He moved to the outside.

An overview reveals the following:

1. The apostles worked miracles.
2. The people feared the church and especially feared the apostles.
3. God added to the church.
4. People were attracted to the demonstration of power.
5. And there was a negative reaction to the positive outflow of God's power.

Verse 17 indicates that the high priest was filled with indignation and put the apostles into prison. That seems to be the historical pattern: the "aint's" are constantly trying to silence the saints.

Look at the first word in verse 19, Luke says "But..." – in contrast to what has just transpired – "on the flip side, God's got a better idea, a different agenda". The apostles were prisoners, **but** couldn't be held in bondage. They were warned to obey man, **but** they resolved to obey God. Their obedience produced a wonderful opportunity for them to witness with conviction and power.

They were beaten, instructed not to speak about Jesus, **but** look at their actions. Verses 41 and 42 indicate that they were glad to suffer for Jesus' sake; they continued to meet for worship. (**A little persecution didn't stop them.**) They did not stop, slow down or swerve from proclaiming the Gospel. They were steadfast in the face of persecution.

Are we?

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# ACTS 6

Ron Riffe

**Acts 6:3-6** <sup>3</sup> "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; <sup>4</sup> "but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

In Chapter Six we have the first recorded dispute within the emerging church. It is interesting to check out the solution that was found to the problem and how it might apply to us. First, we notice that the leadership came up with the solution, "Go Find", but that said they did not appoint the men to implement it. The people rose up the men. This is how it should be. When there is a problem, particular when it is viewed personally, like this problem, people do not accept imposed leadership like they accept leadership that rises up out of their midst.

Second we notice that the leadership did not let the problem distracted them from their main task. Too often leadership lets themselves get distracted by problems that are best delegated to others. Each and every position within the church has its responsibilities, its duties. Too many times we are distracted by things, which while important, should not occupy our time. The apostles realized this, found a solution and let the people find the leadership and implement the solution.

And what were the results of the apostles understanding their duties? What was the effect of having leadership over the problem being raised up rather than dictated? **Acts 6:7** <sup>7</sup> 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. When things are done right within the church there is a natural expansion of the church.

This leaves us with a few things to contemplate. If you are already in a leadership position, are you taking on problems that should not be yours? Are you being distracted by things that are better given to others? If you desire to be in leadership are you preparing for leadership? These men were put into leadership because the people already had observed them. When the people of God are dealing with what is in their realm of responsibility the church grows. Are you, as a man of God, fulfilling the calling in the area in which you responsible?

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# ACTS 7

Jason White

As I read and reread Acts Chapter 7, I kept thinking that I had bit off more than I could chew. I started in the New King James Version, reread the chapter in the Amplified version, then read some of the study notes in a study bible. I even found a book that I had purchased that was nothing but a study of the book of Acts. I read in it the notes on chapter seven, hoping to pull something for it, but nothing really stuck out. I then reread it yesterday for the third time.

In reading it yesterday, I realized one simple principle that was repeated three times throughout the chapter that applied directly to my life's experience today: "God speaks to His people outside of the church." What I mean by this is simple. God does not need to be limited by us in the sense that He can only speak to us in church. Yes, I have heard from God on many an occasion in church, during worship, prayer, and even during the preaching of the word. Some of His most powerful words to me, however, have been in the shower, in my closet, and most recently in my van driving down the road.

Please take the time to read Acts Chapter 7, concentrating on the three times that God spoke to his people outside of the tabernacle.

Remember; don't put God in a box. Speak to him in prayer on a daily basis, and He will answer you!

God Bless You,

# ACTS 8

Dave Traxler

Chapter 8 opens as Saul continues his persecution of the church, as a body and as individuals. We as a body of believers must do what God commands of us and that is to spread the Good News. We must know that we will be persecuted. The enemy will do whatever he can to disrupt God's work. In reality, Saul caused the church to be scattered, which actually helped spread the Gospel. God took this attack and turned it around for his purpose. He can do that for us as well if we let Him.

No matter what, we must continue preaching the word as Philip did in Samaria. He had a good season as he preached Christ to them. As they heard, signs and wonders followed. As they received Jesus, they experienced the power of God. Even Simon the sorcerer was converted and they were all baptized in water. The apostles hearing of this sent Peter and John to follow Philip and they laid hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit with miracle signs. This was given to them freely because they believed. We are charged to share the word and to lay hands on people and this will be followed by signs and wonders.

Philip then continues to be obedient and goes where he is led to a Divine Appointment to share Jesus with a non-believer who accepts Christ and is baptized. We also need to be obedient and sensitive to the will of God and be aware of those situations that God places us in to share His love. By sharing His love, we can casually bring Jesus into our conversation with others. We will be able to lead others to salvation.

Philip was fruitful because he was obedient and ready. We can fulfill the great commission by being sensitive to the Spirit, ready at all times for those Divine Appointments to show and talk about Jesus love. We need to be the light of the world to others. We need to equip the saints with the power of God. We need to be the leaders in our families, in our churches, and in our workplace.

As you read Chapter 8, look around and think. Who is persecuting you? Who is your Saul? Is it someone at work, someone at home, a friend? Are you open and ready for those Divine Appointments in your life?

# ACTS 9

John Teller

Acts 9 is loaded with information: the persecution of Christians, Saul's conversion, the beginning of his ministry and the contrasting ministry of Peter.

I want to focus on one thought at the beginning of this chapter that will help us all keep things into perspective. In verse 4, we learn that this persecution was in fact not against Christians, but against God Himself. As men, we need to keep things in this perspective.

When Paul finally reveals the truth of this in Ephesians 6, he states that we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but spiritual hosts of wickedness. Jesus, in confronting Saul (later Paul) lets him know firsthand that his persecution is against the very One that he thought he was serving.

Two things come to mind from this revelation. First, we need to make sure that our motives are always in step with God's and make sure that they are Biblical. As men, we can get so caught up by our opinion on a matter that we will fight "to the death" to prove a point. As men, we want to be right, we want to lead and we want to show that we know what we are talking about.

It is imperative that we keep our relationship with our Heavenly Father strong enough to know when we are being led by Him and when we are not. Second, we must always understand that conflict is going to happen because we are men of God and we cannot take it personally when situations or people affect us. God will take up our cause, just as He did then.

We may not see an immediate deliverance, but we must know that He is in control and He takes our persecutions personally. With God on our side, no one can really stand against us. Others may upset us, inconvenience us, make us uncomfortable, or even make us look bad.

However, in the end, they cannot determine our destiny, our future, or our salvation, all of which are secured by God Himself.

# ACTS 10

Senior Pastor Les Sanders  
Milford Assembly of God

Praise the Lord! When you look at this chapter you become very aware that our God is in control. He knows all things and He is working out all things for His glory and our good.

In verses 1-8 we read that Cornelius, a Roman centurion, has a vision and an angel of God speaks to him. Cornelius was a Gentile, a man who prayed, gave to the offerings and – a man who desired more of God.

In verses 9-18 Peter had a vision that broke down the prejudices that would have stopped him from even hearing Cornelius' request. God is Sovereign!

This becomes so important for us today because this was the door opening to the Gentiles. *All* the promises and blessings promised to the God's chosen people (Israel) were made available to us. And that includes both Salvation and the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

It is noteworthy that the initial evidence of speaking in tongues is not just for the ones who gathered in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost, but for "all who heard the message" (verse 44). That blessing is for us too. We too must seek the Promise of the Father.

Guys – pray for more, pray for the empowering of the Holy Spirit and know that our Lord is sovereign.

# ACTS 11

Joshua Wotawa  
Associate Pastor of Christian Life Center

1. Apostles initial response (vs. 1-3)
  - a. They are upset that Peter would go to a gentile's house even if it was to preach the gospel.
2. Peters explanation (vs. 4-18)
  - a. Peter starts with the telling of the vision God gave him back in Acts chapter 10:9-16. We can see that the Lord was teaching Peter that no man should be called common or unclean (Acts 10:28b).
  - b. In verses 13-18 Peter finishes his explanation by letting them know that an angel was sent to men in Joppa telling them to send for Peter and he would tell them words that will save him and his household (Acts 11:14)
  - c. The key verse here is 18 because of how the apostles react to what Peter has said. All of them rejoiced realizing that repentance to life has been given to the Gentiles as well and the Jews. This positive reaction is key because this sets the stage and for Paul's extensive ministry to Gentiles.
    - a. Peter's vision, his understanding of the vision, and the apostles reaction to Peters explanation was crucial for the opening of the gospel to be preached to all people groups.
3. More Gentiles receive the Lord (vs.19-26)
  - a. The Gentiles here at Antioch who received the word of the Lord heard it because of the Jews who were scattered after the death of Stephen (the first martyr). These Jews were preaching only to other Jews, and some of the Jews who heard this preaching went to Antioch and spoke to the Gentiles (Hellenists) there and they believed and turned to the Lord.
    - a. The "Scattering" mentioned in verse 19 was a forcible relocation of the Jews by the Romans. This was done periodically as to keep one people group or religion from getting too large and becoming a threat. At these spots of relocation the Jews would set up worship and teaching centers to maintain religious and cultural identity.
    - b. Hellenists - a Hellenist one who imitates the manners and customs or the worship of the Greeks, and use the Greek tongue used in the NT of Jews born in foreign lands and speaking Greek.
  - b. In Verses 22-25 we see that the news of more Gentiles receiving the Lord comes to the apostles. They send Barnabas to Antioch to check on the situation. Barnabas sees that this is the work of Gods grace and encourages the gentiles to continue with the Lord. Then he and Paul stay at Antioch for a year to teach these new believers so that they would become strong and not fall. Just as Jesus commanded to go and make disciples not merely Christians.
4. Prophecy of a famine (vs. 27-30)

- a. In these remaining 4 verses we see a prophet named Agabus give a prophecy telling of a great famine. And we see the response of the disciples, which is a response of faith and belief. Because of their faithful response relief was sent to the areas that would be affected.
- b. These verses also show us what the difference is between someone who has the gift of prophecy and gives a prophetic word and the office of a prophet.
  - a. Predictive prophecy about specific future events is the exclusive ministry of "the prophet"; while in 1Cor. 14:1 Paul encouraged every one to prophesy for the general edification or encouragement of the church (1Cor. 14:3). The Scriptures distinguish between the gift of prophecy and the office of the prophet.

# ACTS 12

Pastor Les Sanders  
Milford Assembly of God

Out of all the many sermons that are done on this chapter of Acts, I am brought to the fact that the fact two times in this one chapter angels are mentioned. It has been brought to my mind more than once this year that we need to be more aware of the work of angels. They are here to help, protect, deliver, and administer judgment and much more. They are here to do the bidding of the Lord. They are not just Old Testament beings but kingdom beings created by God for His service.

The New Testament has a number of events that include the manifested presence of angels. Let me list a few in Acts that do not include the birth or His resurrection of Jesus:

- Acts 27:21-25 Paul in the midst of a storm.
- Acts 5:17-29 The apostles being set free from prison.
- Acts 8:26 Phillip getting directions to Gaza.
- Acts 10:1-8 Peter and Cornelius encounter.

We often read these scriptures and glance over the fact that God's angels were manifested unto men in all these events. These events were very important to the growth of the church. I believe this carries over to our lives as Spirit Empowered believers we think that we need no angels we have the Holy Spirit! Do we have more than Peter, Phillip, Paul, or any of the apostles? Maybe we need to be more aware of the spiritual realm that we have been adopted into looking for the help of our Father's angels. Then maybe we might see more of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit as we find ourselves where we belong and maybe if we put ourselves out there we will see His supernatural deliverances.

Keep seeking His will and He will send His power.

Pastor Les

# ACTS 13

Rev. Don Allen, Jr.

The great English pastor and writer Charles Spurgeon wrote, *"If God has fit you to be a missionary, I would not have you shrivel down to be a king."*

Acts 13 could have been Pastor Spurgeon's text. Paul and Barnabas are called to be missionaries. Perhaps a better term would be "appointed by the Holy Spirit as mission-visionaries".

The challenge was not simple. It was not something to take lightly. It was not a job that paid well (if at all) and it was not a position that everyone was going to like to see them in. Family might think them crazy, friends may not understand them, and, as Christ tells us, the world would despise them. However, they accepted the challenge, the responsibility, and the unforgettable peace of mind and heart that comes with knowing you're in the will of God – at HIS time, in HIS place, doing HIS will.

Gentleman, where has God called you to start on your missionary journey? Is it in your own home, neighborhood, job, or school? Or perhaps God has begun the process of appointing you to the mission field someone where in the world. Wherever the call of God takes you, stand with the respect and perseverance that Paul did in Acts 13.

# Acts 14

Rev. Don Allen, Jr.

Acts 14:8-10 - *In Lystra there sat a man crippled in his feet, who was lame from birth and had never walked.<sup>9</sup> He listened to Paul as he was speaking. Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed<sup>10</sup> and called out, "Stand up on your feet!" At that, the man jumped up and began to walk. (NIV)*

Founder of the Methodist church, John Wesley (1703-1791) wrote this in his great commentary *John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*: "He had faith to be healed - He felt the power of God in his soul; and thence knew it was sufficient to heal his body also."

A typical man in today's society may read this passage of Scripture with some doubts. Science has become the norm and distrust of the church's teaching is widespread. Contemporary man would argue that there must surely be some scientific explanation for the crippled man's healing. Contemporary man believes that he (through knowledge and science) can handle anything himself.

However, the truth is that God miraculously healed this man 2,000 years ago by the prayers of faithful believers and the expectant faith of the crippled man. The truth is that God is still doing the same miracles *today* in the lives of individuals all around us. It is time we stand as men and shout from the rooftops what God is doing in our lives, the lives of our families, and in the church we call our home.

# ACTS 15

Chuck Clevenger

The fifteenth chapter of Acts has some interesting things in it. For American Christians, the words of Acts 15:20 (NIV) sound somewhat foreign to our ears: "Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood."

Even with all the required labeling on our food supply, I've never seen any food "polluted by idols" nor have I noticed any "meat from strangled animals" in the Kroger meat case.

What relevance does this have for us today? Eugene Peterson authored a contemporary rendering of the Bible, called *The Message*. Here is how Acts 15:20 reads in *The Message*: "We'll write them a letter and tell them, 'Be careful to not get involved in activities connected with idols, to guard the morality of sex and marriage, to not serve food offensive to Jewish Christians—blood, for instance.'"

I trust that translation blesses you with insight into what Luke was trying to communicate. Let me ask you to consider and meditate upon the phrase, "food polluted by idols."

Pollution can cause disease. Wikipedia (the free Internet encyclopedia) says that pollution can cause cancer, lupus, immune diseases, allergies, asthma, respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease, throat inflammation, chest pain, congestion and even death. The natural world we see parallels the spiritual world we don't see. Worldly pollution causes physical disease. Spiritual pollution can cause spiritual problems.

We are what we eat. If we eat spiritual food polluted by idols, doesn't it stand to reason that our spiritual health will suffer?

So what sort of spiritual food should we eat? We would do well to follow Jesus' eating habits. Jesus said (John 4:32, 34), "I have food to eat that you know nothing about. My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work." Let us do His will and finish the work He has assigned to us.

Jesus also said that He is the Bread of life (John 6:48). Let us live together in a communion with our church family, observing communion in remembrance of Him.

Taste and see that the LORD is good;  
blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Psalms 34:8 (NIV)

# ACTS 16

Chuck Clevenger

Paul encounters a slave girl in verse 16 who had "a spirit by which she predicted the future." Her owners greatly profited by her fortune-telling abilities. She followed Paul around for many days. Paul became annoyed and boldly spoke to the spirit within her, setting her free (verse 18).

- When we follow Paul as he followed Christ, notice his pattern of ministry. He didn't minister deliverance the first time he encountered the slave girl. She followed him "many days." When we do the works of God, we must do them in God's timing.

So what was Paul's reward for such a heroic act of ministry? He and Silas were imprisoned. Have you ever felt imprisoned (or to use a softer word, trapped) by the circumstances of life? Do you ever feel stuck in a job you don't like? Have you ever met a man who felt trapped in a loveless marriage? Have you ever felt that your life was a joyless one of endless to-do lists, overtime, family obligations and other duties?

- Paul's response to being imprisoned should be our model.

About midnight (the darkest hour of the night), Paul and Silas are praying and singing hymns – singing loudly enough that the other prisoners heard them (verse 25). Suddenly an earthquake shook the prison's foundations, breaking open the prison doors and loosing the chains of all the prisoners. Fearing the prisoners had all escaped, the jailer was about to commit suicide. Paul's shout stopped him. As a result, the jailer and his family were saved (verses 30-34). And, the jailer provided Paul and Silas with treatment for their wounds (verse 33).

- What should we do at our midnight hour? Sing and praise God unashamedly! Sing loudly enough that others hear us. We can be set free by prayer and praise.
- What should we do when God intervenes and sets us free? Minister to those who had previously worked as our jailer. By demonstrating God's love and grace, Paul won the jailer's entire family.

Let us follow Paul as he followed Christ (I Corinthians 11:1).

- When the Holy Spirit prompts us to set the prisoner free, let us boldly proclaim liberty to the captive.
- When we're imprisoned, let us pray sing the praises of God.
- And, when we're set free, let us not neglect the jailer and his family.

Acts chapter 17 has two contributors

## ACTS 17

**REV. TERRY HONEYCUTT**

State Director of HonorBound for the Michigan

The 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts is very interesting. There are 4 major areas in the chapter:

1. Verses 1-9 might be sub-titled, "Thessalonica: Turned the World Upside Down"
2. Verses 10-15 might be called "Berea: Many Receive the Word"
3. "Paul's Sermon on Mars Hill" is found in verses 16-23
4. Paul's discourse (verses 24-34) on the "Unknown God" concludes the chapter.

In the first few verses God is telling us about the earth and what He has done to make it. Verse 28 says "for in Him we live and move and have our being..." Therefore we are also His offspring. Like many of you, I had a wonderful earthly father and I would never do anything to hurt him if I could help it. My earthly father was flesh and blood while Jesus is the eternal Father. I could never do anything to grieve our Father yet we do it everyday in our deeds. We pass by the needy and do nothing. We sit in front of the TV when we could be reading our Bible or praying. In verse 30 God gives solemn warning when He says "Truly these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent." God says He is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11. KJV). Our call as men is to reach the world for Jesus, one man at a time, helping them answer God's call to repentance.

## Acts Chapter 17

Tim Wells

Life is sometimes hard and the people we meet are often nuts!

Sometimes life is a lot of hard work, is it not? Even though you know God is real - maybe even having performed miracles in your life - Do you ever find yourself laboring just to get through the day? I do. And isn't it sometimes hard to live the faith when everywhere we look we see so many odd ideas about who God is and what is the Real Truth?

Well, Paul dealt with the same two issues.

(1) Hardships -

In Ch 16, Paul had just walked out of prison after God crumbled the walls.

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But even after such a great miracle, he was back to the daily grind of moving from place to place, reasoning about Christ in the synagogues - some believing and some not, and eluding those that would seek to harm him. So we can see that the life we live here on earth will not always be free from hardship, even if we walk in His power as Paul did.

(2) Nutty people -

As Paul preached in Ch 17, he encountered lots of strange theology. The Epicureans believed that God was inaccessible and that the universe came about by chance. They valued the emotions of happiness and pleasure. Paul also found Stoics who believed a personal relationship with God was impossible and that emotions were irrelevant. Instead they adored logic, reason, and self-control. We too will encounter false teachings that will question our faith.

So... What now?

Please remember that, just like Paul, our struggles are only in vain if we have no greater purpose to work for. Let's persevere and help those who are misguided. Paul must have needed to tap into that greater purpose in order to motivate, and energize himself. This momentary, light affliction that we must all live through needs to have a greater purpose.

Acts Ch 17, V 28 says "For in Him we live and move have our being."

Awesome!

# ACTS 18

Rev. Don Allen, Jr.

As I read this chapter today, I was moved by the ability of Paul, Apollos, Pricilla, and Aquila to be able to teach in the synagogue among the Jewish leaders, and next door in the house-church among the gentiles.

I noticed they were able to defend their beliefs and faith. They stood on the Biblical belief that the Scripture was accurate and that it is the only truth for salvation. I often wonder if I am truly able to present the Gospel in a clear precise way without any compromise. Is the churning in my stomach fear because I sense that people will know that I'm not as smart as I act?

What ever it is, I need (just as Paul, Apollos and the others needed) a good dose of Jesus and the Holy Ghost power. I need to spend time studying daily the Scripture and I need a heart to present the facts from the Word of God clearly and without compromise.

This is my prayer today. What is yours?

# ACTS 19

Dr. Chris Tuell

In Acts 19:6 we find that when Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

Paul wanted to make sure that the disciples were equipped with everything they needed to follow the Lord. Once again, we see an example where he lays hands on people, and the Holy Spirit comes. This was more than just an attitude of the heart, the result was evident -- the people spoke in tongues and prophesied. As believers, we know we always have the presence of the Lord with us. But sometimes, the Holy Spirit shows Himself in a more pronounced fashion, where His presence and power are manifested in various ways. That is why we pray: "Come, Holy Spirit". We are inviting the Holy Spirit to increase his presence, and to intensify his power among us.

Let us pray...Come, Holy Spirit. Come with your presence and your power, to fill your purpose. Stir up the gifts you want me to have, and teach me to use them for your eternal kingdom. Thank you for being the one who not only calls but also equips us with what we need.

Glory!

# ACTS 20

Vern VanOpdorp

As I read this chapter, I noticed 3 things:

1. Eutychus was bored, dead, and then alive (much like we are)
2. Paul was passionate about "the mission" (like we should be)
3. Giving is a blessing (a God-like attribute we should want)

First, let's deal with Eutychus. Paul was teaching up a storm. He was passionate about the Lord, willing to do whatever was needed to get the Word out! He was willing to travel wherever, however and at any time he needed, to get the gospel to the people (like our missionaries today). Eutychus was at a "meeting" expecting the Lord to show up, (just as we expect Him to show up today in our churches). As Paul was teaching, Eutychus was getting bored. At some point he was totally oblivious to any teaching whatsoever, fell out the window and died. The next part is so very incredible. Paul raced down the stairs and threw himself on Eutychus and exclaimed that he was "alive" and not to worry. This shows me "what Jesus would do." He tries to teach us and we get bored. Then we fall away from God and He always comes and rescues us from death!!!!!!!

The next time that pastor or a visitor is teaching at church, take the time to listen to what is being said and concentrate on the Lord. (At least we aren't on the second floor at CLC!).

Second, Paul was passionate about his mission. Look at Acts 20:24, <sup>v24</sup> *However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace".* This is the way we should live our lives – ready to do whatever it take to get the Gospel to the world. There is not enough time on this earth to just play and lollygag. There are people who will go to Hell if we don't have the same passion as Paul. I always tell our youth at the church, "There are only so many opportunities to get the Gospel out there – do your part." Sometimes we "plant the seed," sometimes we "fertilize the seed," sometimes we "water the seed" and sometimes we get to "harvest the crops." As long as we are open to the Lord, He will guide and direct us in what to do.

Third, always remember – it is better to give than to receive. The Lord said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." **BUT**, when you give, give as unto the Lord. Don't give with strings attached! Don't brag about what you give – give unconditionally and without expectation of anything in return! So many times we want to give (whether it is money or items), then we want to tell the recipient what to do with it or how to use it. That is not the giver's responsibility. Let the receiver do as they see fit. If you give as unto the Lord, you will be blessed!

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My wife has a little saying: "Let go and let God." If you give it all to Him – He will supply your needs! Remember, it is all God's anyway, use it to His glory!!!!!!

## **ACTS - CHAPTER 22**

**"Get Ready, Get Up, and Go!"**

Frank Williams

**Get Ready** – We are instructed to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (I Peter 3:15). Jesus tells us that when (not if), you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, "do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at the time what you should say."

In Acts 22, Paul is making his defense to an angry mob of Jews in Jerusalem. The mob became quiet when he was telling "his story". Each of us has a unique story of how Jesus has changed our lives. Let me encourage all of us to be ready to give our story. God wants to use our life-story as a testimony to others, and – be assured, they will listen.

**Get Up** – After Saul fell to the ground, Jesus told him to "Get up, and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do" (verse 10). At that moment, Saul didn't know his specific calling or ministry. He didn't pray and seek God's direction. He didn't mope and cry because he was blind. Instead, he got up, followed the Jesus' instructions and awaited further instructions.

After Ananias prayed for Saul, he told him, "Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins." All of us are blinded by sin, and most of us have had our eyes opened by the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we need to get up and move on to the next phase of our ministry.

Jesus wants us to get up and do something! Grace alone isn't going to fulfill the Great Commission. We need to take action and the first step is to get up and start building God's Kingdom.

**Go** – Jesus told Paul to "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (verse 21). He told Ananias to "Go! (to the house of Judas) because this man (Paul) is my chosen instrument" (Acts 9:15).

After Jesus gets us "ready" and after we "get up", Jesus wants us to "go" and spread the truth about His redeeming love to a lost and dying world. He wants to send us out to fulfill the great commission. Time is short, so please – Get Ready, Get Up, and Go!

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# **ACTS 23**

*Michael A. Fiore, Pastor  
Everlasting Warriors Ministry Int'l*

## PAUL SPEAKS TO THE SANHEDRIN

### **A Look at key Verses & Facts**

v. 1-3 Paul had a zeal for righteousness and the law. He knew that it was unlawful for someone to order him to be slapped, yet they were judging him by the law they did not keep.

v. 5 Paul apologized to the high priest because it was against the law to speak evil against him. There is a hint here that perhaps Paul's "thorn in the flesh" (mentioned in his epistles) was an eye disease. Certainly Paul should have recognized Ananias, for Paul had worked closely with him in the days when he was still prosecuting the Church.

v. 11 Paul could easily have been discouraged at this point because his great dream of preaching to the Jews had proved to be disastrous. Paul had been warned by the Lord about going to Jerusalem, and none of the Christians there stood by him. Still, Jesus told him to be cheerful, for a witness had been preached. Our job is only to bear witness. The Holy Spirit convicts hearts and brings people to repentance. We don't have to worry about seeing results, as long as we have done our part.

v. 16-21 God often works in our lives in such a natural way that we don't realize something supernatural is happening.

v. 23 Paul was conducted from Jerusalem with a guard of 470 soldiers. The Roman government took excellent care of its citizens.

v. 31 Antipatris was about 25 miles from Jerusalem through the Judean hills.

v. 32 The way from Antipatris to Caesarea was less dangerous to travel, so only the cavalry escorted Paul on this stage of the journey.

### ***Key Words Study***

#### **Respect**

1. To feel or show deferential regard for; esteem.
2. To avoid violation of or interference with: *respect the speed limit.*
3. To relate or refer to; concern.

#### **Responsibility**

1. The state, quality, or fact of being responsible.
2. Something for which one is responsible; a duty, obligation, or burden.

## Authority

1. The power to enforce laws, exact obedience, command, determine, or judge.
  - a. One that is invested with this power, especially a government or body of government officials: *land titles issued by the civil authority.*
2. Power assigned to another; authorization: Deputies were given authority to make arrests.
3. A public agency or corporation with administrative powers in a specified field: *a city transit authority.*
4.
  - a. An accepted source of expert information or advice: a noted authority on birds; a reference book often cited as an authority.
  - b. A quotation or citation from such a source: *biblical authorities for a moral argument.*
5. Justification; grounds: On what authority do you make such a claim?
6. A conclusive statement or decision that may be taken as a guide or precedent.
7. Power to influence or persuade resulting from knowledge or experience: *political observers who acquire authority with age.*
8. Confidence derived from experience or practice; firm self-assurance: *played the sonata with authority.*

## Rank

1. A relative position in a society.
  - a. An official position or grade: *the rank of sergeant.*
  - b. A relative position or degree of value in a graded group.
  - c. High or eminent station or position: *persons of rank.*
2. A row, line, series, or range.
3.
  - a. A line of soldiers, vehicles, or equipment standing side by side in close order.
  - b. ranks The armed forces.
  - c. ranks Personnel, especially enlisted military personnel.
4. ranks A body of people classed together; numbers: *joined the ranks of the unemployed.*
5. Pull rank - To use one's superior rank to gain an advantage.

### Questions to Ponder

1. What sparks this exchange of acquisitions against Paul? (Reference Chap 21:21,28)
2. Why (and how) does Paul show his respect for the Jewish Law? (v. 1-5)
3. Why does Paul change the focus of attention from keeping the Law to his hope in the resurrection?  
Given the tension between the Pharisees and Sadducees on this issue, describe what you think the few minutes of this assembly must have been like.
4. What effect does the split have on Paul's case?

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Questions to take to Heart

1. When facing death (to self), what *responsibility* do want to have fulfilled before God?  
How can you pursue that course of action this week?
2. How has the Lord encouraged you during hard times?
3. What could be your "Rome" – the next crucial in your spiritual journey?

Questions to Dig to the Root

1. Who are my authorities in my spiritual journey?
2. Have I been submissive to the law or spirit and lived in servant obedience?
3. Is the Resurrection worth it to me to die for daily?
4. How have I died to the resurrection? (yesterday/today)

# ACTS 24

Wayne A. Williams

Will we be honorable prisoners?

As believers, we are not of this world; our kingdom/home is in heaven. Therefore we are sojourners in a foreign country. Paul's witness was:

- 1) He came to Jerusalem to worship God. He came to bring gifts for the poor, to present offerings and he was clean when found in the temple. He was ready to give the reason for his hope and give instruction to others.
- 2) He worshiped the God of their fathers as a follower of the Way.
- 3) He agreed with the Law and the Prophets with the same hope in God for resurrection from the dead.
- 4) He had a clear conscience before God.

We are operating in enemy territory and we too may become prisoners of war. Are we prepared to give witness to those of this world? Let's follow Paul's example!

- a) Are we positioned to be equally and rightly accused of worshipping the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? He is a God who takes us into a covenant relationship through Jesus, our Messiah's sacrifice on the cross.
- b) Is our faith grounded by the Scriptures?
- c) Are our eyes looking forward to the future when we will awaken to everlasting life? At the same time, do we acknowledge that the unsaved will awaken to shame and everlasting contempt? (Read Daniel 12:2, John 5:29.)
- d) Can we honestly say, as Paul said, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"? (Acts 23:1)

Prayer –

Lord, give us strength, wisdom and understanding to be faithful bond servants that we can stand before the court of man and be truly found guilty of being faithful followers of the Lord Jesus, while being examples to the unsaved of the hope we have, that they may desire what we have in you – salvation and eternity with you. Amen

# ACTS 25

Rev. Don Allen, Jr.

A couple years ago, I was required to testify in court about a former client's progress in treatment at the agency I worked for. I was asked to sit in the witness stand and swear that everything I said was "the truth, the whole truth, so help me God". Everybody was there – those defending my client, those prosecuting her and the presiding judge. My part was simply telling the truth!

In Acts 25, Paul faces the same dilemma: he is asked to testify about his actions and beliefs before the court of Governor Felix. He is required to share why his belief is different than those that attempt to discredit him. The high priest Annanias is there, along with Tertullus, a lawyer whose purpose is to convict Paul of being a troublemaker and turning the people from Judaism.

My question for us today is ...

- × If being a Christian were a crime this country, how long would it take for them to convict you?
- × Would they find the evidence on your computer?
- × Would they hear it from your family and friends?

Gentleman, I do not want to see anyone persecuted for their faith. However, a time will come when it may happen around us. Will you have a faith like Paul and be convicted by your own words?

# ACTS 26

Brain Schuckman

Setting the stage.....Paul was seized and about to be killed by a mob of Jews, but was arrested by Romans due to the uproar. Paul is placed in front of Roman authorities to be convicted, but no one will find him guilty, so he's passed to the next higher authority. The most recent authority is King Agrippa and he is granting Paul a chance to tell his "story", his defense if you will.

Verses 1-3 I found this very interesting how Paul begins by complimenting and speaking highly of King Agrippa

Verses 4-21 Paul is telling his "story" of what has led him to this point in his life. He begins by telling the people about how he was raised and how he lived as a strictest Pharisee and that he adhered to the laws of the Jewish religion. I think there is a lesson at this point, because we see Paul relating to the masses of people, he's telling them that he's just like them and establishing common ground with the people he is trying to help. He's not "holier than thou", but a guy who grew up just like them.

Paul concludes verses 13-18 telling his story of his conversion the road to Damascus...the most compelling moment in his life.

Now this is where it gets really good....at verse 19, Paul turns to King Agrippa and claims (from the Amplified Bible), "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." I think this is a powerful verse, because in the middle of his story (in the middle of his defense so he does not put to death), he turns to his "judge, jury, and executioner" and makes a bold statement that basically tells King Agrippa, 'Hey look, do with me as you please, but the heavenly vision is what I'll stay obedient too.' Paul's priority is on the mission placed before him by Jesus.

Another lesson in Verse 22, "...I have had the help which comes from God..." How could Paul make the statement that he did in verse 19? Simple....he used the help from God. Have you ever looked at a task/vision/mission/job/prompting and thought, "There is no way I could do that!?" I've been there, blame it on the male ego, our fallen nature, or whatever, but like Paul we should all strive to first look for the "help which comes from God".

In verse 23, Paul shares the Gospel message of Jesus.

In Verse 26 Paul claims, "I speak with bold frankness and confidence". Paul would not cower down even after being challenged and called insane.

The bold frankness and confidence carries over to verse 27 where Paul then turns and addresses King Agrippa to learn Agrippa's response to Paul's Gospel message. Have you ever shared your belief with someone, but were afraid/nervous to hear their response? "Oh well, I planted the seed, I'll let it grow and see what they think later." It's almost like we are afraid of what others will think of us, so we hesitate to hear their response.

Now, don't forget, Paul is basically on trial for his life and he's given a chance to prove that he shouldn't be put to death, but during that time, he shares and asks King Agrippa to become a Christian....powerful.

Regardless of Paul's message, King Agrippa in verse 28 makes little of Paul's request for him to become a Christian....."you think it a small task to make a Christian of me?"

This is cool, in the face of temporary rejection, Paul replies that it doesn't matter if it takes a long time or a short time, but that he desires that Agrippa and everyone else that can hear him would come to believe in Jesus.

Paul is "sticking to his guns" and stays obedient to his heavenly vision. Maybe I've just seen too many movies, but when thinking of Paul standing in front of King Agrippa (and a mob of people who want to kill him) and how he delivers his desire to save this people in the face of rejection, I thought back to

Rocky III (I know, I know this is weird, I'm bring Rocky into this) and the scene where Rocky is getting the snot beat out of him by the champ Apollo Creed, the "Rocky moment" happens and Rocky gets the adrenaline rush, starts to fight back, and says to Apollo, "You ain't so bad, you ain't so bad, you ain't nothin'. C'mon, champ, hit me in the face! My mom hits harder than you!"

Hopefully I'm not stretching this too far, but Paul won't be denied.....he's beat attacked by a mob, in chains, thrown in jail, threatened by death, found innocent but not released, and he responds by telling this people that he still believes in the message of Jesus and wishes the same for them.

The chapter wraps up by King Agrippa finding no reason why Paul should be deserving of death and that he should be set free.

Wrapping up:

I hope all of us will have a powerful story to tell, like Paul in verses 4-21, will we have anything significant to tell in our defense?

Did we stay obedient to the heavenly vision God placed in our hearts? Maybe we aren't all called to the mission field, but we got to be created for more than watching TV.

I hope we all can call and rely on the help from God when we are in need.

And when the chips are down and everyone seems to be against us, let's know that we are all praying for each other to get back up when rejected and that we are able to stay obedient to the heavenly vision when others don't understand.

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# ACTS 27

Chuck Clevenger

In Acts 27, the prisoner Paul is sailing to Italy. But the journey is a stormy one. Verse 4 says "the winds were against us" and verse 7 reports the going was slow because of the "difficulty arriving off Cnidus."

Paul speaks in verse 10 to the sailors, warning them the voyage would be disastrous and "bring great loss to ship and cargo, and to our own lives also." But his warning went unheeded. Verses 14-15 tell of a ferocious and violent wind of hurricane force. On the third day, (v. 19), the men threw the ship's tackle overboard in an effort to keep the ship afloat.

THEN, Paul spoke again. He told of an angel who stood by him and assured him that God would spare their lives. Paul (v. 25) encouraged the men.

So, what gives? Was Paul a false prophet? In verse 10, he said there would be a loss of life and in verse 24 he states quite the opposite. The angel told Paul that God had given to him (Paul) the lives of all those sailing with him.

Why did God give Paul the lives of his ship-mates? The Bible is clear: You have not, because you ask not. I submit the corollary to that is also true: You DO have because you did ask. During the three days (v. 19), I can imagine Paul praying, interceding for the men and their journey. And, 14 days later (v. 27), the ship runs aground and ALL the men are saved.

Some things to think about:

1. If you hear a warning of disaster from God, that may or may not be a word of certainty. God may be alerting you of impending danger to motivate you to intercede, pray and change history.
2. When the journey of life gets stormy, men need the wisdom and word of God. Are we spending 3 days in prayer that we can hear clearly from God? The world is starving for a fresh word from God. We must speak His word to the storms of life to minister to those around us.
3. If you hear a word of deliverance and promise from God, it may not be instantaneous. Let us wait upon God and see His deliverance. Paul heard the word on the third day, but it wasn't until the 14<sup>th</sup> day that deliverance came.
4. Do you ever feel stuck in the circumstances of life, floating on a boat controlled by someone else? Even as a prisoner, you can hear from God and speak the truth of His deliverance to a lost world.

Let us draw near to God, hear His voice and allow Him to use us to speak to those in our lives. Let us not be discouraged when they don't listen (v. 11). And, when the storms hit, let us spend our days in intercession – the lives and souls of others depend on it.

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# ACTS 28

Rev. Don Allen, Jr.

(vs. 23b-24) ... "From morning till evening he (Paul) explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Some were convinced by what he said, but other would not believe." (NIV)

This marks the conclusion of our time of "Fellowshipping with the Spirit" in the book of Acts. Acts 28 is such an appropriate conclusion to this great book. We've read about the trying events surrounding the shipwreck at the island of Malta, the snake leaping from the fire, and the pending trial in Rome. Through it all, Paul had one thought: share the Gospel (Good News) of Jesus Christ.

I know beyond a shadow of a doubt it is important that we spend time praying and seeking God's face. I know that it is essential that we spend time in daily Bible reading. And I also know the value of praise and worship to Christ our King. However, as Paul nears the end of his time here on earth, one thing stands out in Acts 28 (and really throughout the whole book of Acts). It should be our very essence to share the Gospel with all generations (young and old). We *must* share this glorious Gospel with everyone we come into contact with – whether at home, work, school, or in our neighborhood.

Remember the message that Paul was always quick to share with everyone he came into contact with – that Jesus Loves Them. Let us follow Paul as he followed Jesus in sharing the Good News of God's love and salvation.