

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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SUMMING IT UP: A REVIEW OF ACTS

Acts 1-28

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Today is my last sermon on the book of Acts, at least for a while. I am always moved by the candor and depth of study of the book. While much of the New Testament is composed of letters written by the Apostle Paul, we do have some exceptions. For instance, the four Gospels tell the history of Jesus on this earth. And Revelation tells of the unveiling of Christ in all things.

The book of Acts remains uniquely different from all the other books of the Bible because it tells of the development of the Holy Spirit and the first churches. It reads like a diary of things as they happened. We learn of unity, joy, acceptance, the letting go of old prejudices. We learn of the new Christian culture, the way they settled differences, the way the Gospel spread. It is full of character and excitement. The main person here in the book of Acts is the Apostle Paul. He was on fire as he worked to spread the Gospel himself and strengthened churches.

Here are the 6 topics we'll cover today:

1. God equips his people.
2. God recruits for his cause.
3. God calls people to mission.
4. God calls some to travel for him.
5. Following Christ will have its challenges.
6. God uses circumstances to spread the Gospel.

1 - GOD EQUIPS HIS PEOPLE - Acts 1-8

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to spread the gospel.

- In the very first chapter, they replaced Judas with Matthias. I've spoken from that passage perhaps three times and am impressed by how this chapter tells how the disciples, now apostles, were unified.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 1:23-26

So they nominated two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." ²⁶ Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.

- Peter became a prominent Christian leader.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 2:29-32

"Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.

- The church faced problems within and persecution from without, yet they remained faithful despite the challenges.
- Through the power of the Holy Spirit, many people came to know the Lord.

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: God will equip you to do the work he calls you to do.

2 - GOD RECRUITS FOR HIS CAUSE - Acts 9-12

A Pharisee named Saul was converted to Christianity, and the message of salvation was offered to the Gentiles.

- Saul, who persecuted Christians, met Jesus on the Damascus Road.
- Peter introduced Cornelius and his family to Jesus.

- The Jerusalem Church expressed concern regarding Gentile conversions.
- Barnabas recruited Saul to help minister to the (Greek) church in Antioch.
- God miraculously saved Peter from prison.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 12:5-11

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

⁶The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance.

⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. “Quick, get up!” he said, and the chains fell off Peter’s wrists. ⁸Then the angel said to him, “Put on your clothes and sandals.” And Peter did so. “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me,” the angel told him.

⁹Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him. ¹¹Then Peter came to himself and said, “Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod’s clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen.”

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: As followers of Christ, we must step out of our comfort zones.

3 - GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO MISSION - Acts 13-15

Barnabas, Saul, and John Mark go on their first missionary journey.

- God worked miracles through Saul.
- Saul presented the gospel first to his Jewish brothers and sisters.
- The Jews rejected the gospel and stirred up anger against Christians.
- The Gentiles were more accepting of the message.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 13:44-49

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord.

⁴⁵When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. ⁴⁶Then Paul and

Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: “I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.” ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.

- Saul, now called Paul, faced persecution but grew bolder in his testimony.
- The missionary team reported to the Jerusalem Church.
- Paul disputed the belief that Gentiles needed to follow Jewish religious laws.
- The team split because of a disagreement over John Mark. But the split wasn't the end of the Gospel message. In fact, it helped the message spread further.

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: God calls all people to him. God calls all believers to some level of mission. Every person has a choice to follow Christ or reject him.

4 - GOD CALLS SOME TO TRAVEL FOR HIM - Acts 16-20

Paul and his new team complete two more missionary journeys.

- Paul teamed up with Silas and Timothy.
- God prevented Paul from preaching in Asia and pointed him to Macedonia.
- The Philippian Church was established in the home of a woman named Lydia.
- Imprisonment resulted in the salvation of a Roman jailer and his family.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 16:20-34

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ He then brought them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” ³¹ They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household.” ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his household were baptized. ³⁴ The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God—he and his whole household.

- Paul targeted cities of major commerce and population.
- The Jews were threatened by Christianity and increasingly attacked Paul.
- Paul was encouraged by other believers like Priscilla and Aquila.
- Other prominent Christian teachers emerged as the gospel spread.
- God used Paul in his travels to preach the gospel, establish churches, and perform miracles.

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: You either travel to share the Gospel or you support those who do! Christians should love, encourage, and obey each other and those in vocational ministry.

5 - FOLLOWING CHRIST WILL HAVE ITS CHALLENGES - Acts 21-26

After his third missionary journey, Paul made his way back to Jerusalem where opposition to Christianity was worse than ever.

- The Jews incited a mob with false allegations, and they almost killed Paul.
- The Roman soldiers rescued Paul and allowed him to speak to the crowd.
- Paul was imprisoned and transferred out of the city to avoid a murderous plot.
- While he waited for a trial, Paul preached to Jewish and Roman authorities.
- Paul invoked his rights as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 25:8-12

Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”

⁹ Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?”

¹⁰ Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”

¹² After Festus had conferred with his council, he declared: “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!”

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: Pain is part of life, but God can use it for his glory if we let him.

6 - GOD USES CIRCUMSTANCES TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL - Acts 27-28

As a prisoner, Paul traveled to Rome and continued to share the gospel. Paul, other prisoners, and their captors set sail for Rome on a cargo ship.

- Despite warnings and the impending stormy season, ship leaders sailed on.
- The crew tried to save the ship, but a vicious storm threatened to sink it.
- Based on a message from God, Paul assured his shipmates of their safety.
- Paul and his shipmates were shipwrecked on the island of Malta.
- On Malta, God healed Paul from a snake bite and used him to heal others.
- After wintering on the island, they traveled to Rome via another ship.
- Paul was placed on house arrest in Rome and continued preaching.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 28:23-31

They arranged to meet Paul on a certain day, and came in even larger numbers to the place where he was staying. He witnessed to them from morning till evening, explaining about the kingdom of God, and from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets he tried to persuade them about Jesus. ²⁴ Some were convinced by what he said, but others would not believe. ²⁵ They disagreed among themselves and began to leave after Paul had made this final statement: “The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to your ancestors when he said through Isaiah the prophet:

²⁶ “Go to this people and say, “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.” ²⁷ For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ ²⁸ “Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!” ³⁰ For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

I want you to grasp this. Paul, on house arrest, shared Christ with all boldness and without hindrance!

APPLICATION: The application for the modern-day believer: Our love for Christ and others is demonstrated best in a life dedicated to the Lord.

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Sincerely, Paul Gunn
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