

PREACHING THROUGH ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Rightly called by many the "most important book in the Bible," the Acts of the Apostles will make enjoyable and profitable reading for you this month. Join with us as we study this book together.

IMPORTANCE OF THE BOOK

This book alone carries the whole load of inspired history, telling how Christ's Church was established and grew under the leadership of the apostles. There are four records of Jesus' life. There are twenty-one letters to the churches. There is only one record telling how the life and commission of Christ took form in the churches to which the letters were written. That record is in the book of Acts.

IT TELLS

How the church was established.

How the Gospel was preached by inspired men.

How men in every age are to be saved through Christ.

How missionary work was done when men followed Christ most closely.

How the heroes of the faith lived and suffered joyously for their Lord.

THE WRITING OF ACTS

The book was written about A.D. 63 by Luke, the "beloved physician" and companion of Paul. Even the most critical scholars marvel at its historical accuracy.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

- Chapters 1-12: The Church in Jerusalem and Judea (Peter is the main character).
- 1 Preparation for Pentecost.
 - 2 Establishment of the Church.
 - 3-5 The church in Jerusalem.

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- Chapters 6-8 Choosing of the seven, and the preaching of two of them.
- 9 The conversion of Saul.
- 10,11 Extension of the gospel to the Gentiles.
- 12 Persecution of the Christians.
- 13-28 The Church "Unto the Uttermost Parts of the Earth" (Paul is the main character).
- 13,14 Paul's first missionary journey.
- 15 The council at Jerusalem, concerning the Law and the Gospel.
- 16-18 Paul's second missionary journey.
- 19,20 Paul's third missionary journey.
- 21-26 Paul's arrest and imprisonment.
- 27,28 Paul's voyage to Rome.

Sermon Outlines Provided:

- "Ye Shall Be My Witnesses" (Acts 1:1-11)
- "The Christian College and the Churches" (Acts 2:41-47)
- "Conversion of a Thoughtful Man" (Acts 8:25-40)
- "Conversion of a Just Man" (Acts 10)
- "Why Call for a Preacher?" (Acts 10:19-33)
- "Marks of a Good Man" (Acts 11:19-26)
- "Contending in the Faith" (Acts 15:36-41)
- "Timothy Comes to Corinth" (Acts 16:1-5; 18:5)
- "The Conversion of an Active Man" (Acts 16:19-34)

Other Sermon Topics Suggested:

- "Preachers of Pentecost" (Acts 2:1-4, 22-31)
- "Prayer for the Preacher" (Acts 4:23-31)
- "The Things that He Possessed" (Acts 4:32-37)
- "The Conversion of a Religious Man" (Acts 9:1-19)
- "Marks of Nobility" (Acts 17:10, 11)
- "Partners" (Acts 18:1-5, 24-28)

PREACHING THROUGH ACTS
YE SHALL BE MY WITNESSES
(Acts 1:1-11)

INTRODUCTION —

When one is given a job to do, he wants to know the nature of the work. We have a job in the life of the church, immediately and continuing. We must obey our Great Employer.

I. "YE SHALL BE MY WITNESSES"

— the Apostles were addressed.

A. The qualification of a witness.

"Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:40, 41).

"Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, unto . . . that same day when he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21, 22).

B. Witnesses were appointed by Christ:

1. Such as would bear testimony without conscious interpretation.
2. They were capable, plain men, without sophistication or subterfuge.

C. Witnesses were given ample evidence of His Lordship, especially in resurrection.

— They were prepared by close living acquaintance.

D. Witnesses promised special power of recollection.

1. "But the comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26).
2. It was recollection, not discovery or invention.

E. Witnesses given the promised power.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you."

II. WITNESSES TO JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA,
AND UNTO THE UTTERMOST. . . .

- A. Beginning at Jerusalem, the apostles preached and led in establishing the Church.
—They covered Judea, through the persecution and scattering.
- B. Samaria is specified in the ministry of Philip.
- C. To the uttermost part of the earth, theirs is the testimony through Scripture.

“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, . . . to write unto thee in order, . . . that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (Luke 1:1-4).

(Illustration)— When a court case is appealed new testimony is not taken, but the recorded testimony of the original witnesses, perhaps now dead, is reviewed by the higher court, as it is presented and argued by counsel. The original witnesses are the only witnesses.

III. AND CONCLUSION —

What then is our position?

- A. *First*, to accept and build on apostolic testimony.
- B. We can be *witnesses* only of those things which we have seen and heard.
- C. But far more importantly, we are *messengers* of the apostolic testimony to the uttermost part of the earth.
- D. This is the purpose of Christ, that the good news of His death for our sins reach all men. (Illustration—the warning of a flood must reach all in the valley. There are newspapers, radio, telephone—but some don’t have them.)
- E. So, too, we have the Bible, church, etc., but some do not hear them—each person must be a messenger.

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THE CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
AND THE CHURCHES

(Acts 2:41-47)

INTRODUCTION —

Meet Lucius, the teacher at Antioch (Acts 13:1).

- A. Came to Antioch from Cyprus (Acts 11:19-21).
- B. Scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4).
- C. Why in Jerusalem? (Acts 2:42).
- D. When did he come? (Acts 2:10).

I. THE EARLY CHAPTERS OF ACTS DESCRIBE A BIBLE COLLEGE ALMOST AS MUCH AS A CHURCH.

- A. The apostles were teachers (Acts 2:42; 4:2, 18).
- B. The Christians were disciples, learners—(See Acts 5:12, 13; Matt. 28:20).
- C. The place of the daily teaching is named; Solomon's porch of Temple (5:12).
- D. Curriculum—"Whatsoever I [Jesus] have commanded."
- E. Graduation and activity (Acts 6, 7, 8).

II. WHAT EDUCATION DID THESE MEN (LUCIUS AND OTHERS) RECEIVE?

- A. It was not accredited—They were "unlearned and ignorant men" (4:13).
- B. Something is more important than accreditation.
- C. What is necessary to do the job? Any other standard may be misleading.
 1. One needs to know and respect the Word of God.
 2. He needs to express himself clearly, accurately, simply.
 3. He needs to have vital touch with life, past and present.
 4. He needs to think for himself.
 5. He needs to be perpetually a student—otherwise comes mental deterioration. ("He isn't a student any more; he got his degree last June"—a horrid calumny!)

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III. THE CURRICULUM WAS ESSENTIALLY CHRIST.

Matthew 11:28, 29—Student does the learning.

- A. Come unto Me, and *I will give you rest*—refreshment.
 - 1. The unburdening of hindering guilt, fears, loneliness, jealousy, selfishness.
 - 2. The renewing of zest and strength for labor.

B. *Come unto Me*—Learn of Me.

- 1. Personal acceptance of a life.
- 2. We can not avoid personalities in learning principles.
- 3. Love, light, and life is in the flesh.

Thus also Christian teaching—Be imitators of me as I am of Christ. (“I want to be the kind of a man Mark Hopkins is.”)

C. Take My yoke upon you—Learning involves commitment.

- 1. Commitment to the task of learning—how efficient are we?
- 2. Commitment to the doing of the thing learned.

D. Acts 2:42 introduces one to classroom, campus, cafeteria, and chapel.

—Small Christian college is best equipped to meet these needs—relationship, attitude, personalities, commitment, atmosphere. *Has something money can't buy. That doesn't mean it doesn't need money.*

IV. EDUCATION REQUIRES FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP IN HEROIC PROPORTIONS (vv. 44, 45).

A. Here is explained the “communism” in Jerusalem.

Not a mistake that was given up; not a pattern for all; but the meeting of a special need in a special way.

B. Acts 2:41-47 tells of Christians far from home without support; “students on full scholarship.”

- 1. The need was seen and it was met.
- 2. Couldn't call on neighboring churches; there were none; this was beginning.

C. Others were asked to help later (Rom. 15:26).

CONCLUSION —

The results—the best possible investment (see I Thess. 3:8).

CONVERSION OF A THOUGHTFUL MAN

(Acts 8:25-40)

INTRODUCTION — the time is spring or early summer in the year about A.D. 35.

The place is a lonely ravine in the south of Judea.

A chariot, marked with the official emblems of dignity of the Ethiopian monarchy, moved along the stone paved Roman road.

I. THE MAN IN THE CHARIOT.

In all probability a black man.

- A. A slave, physically mutilated so that he must always be a slave.
- B. By sheer ability and dependability he has reached an eminence known to few freemen . . . now a person of grandeur.
- C. Still humble, and devout. (The horses are not running — perhaps because of road conditions.)
 1. A proselyte to Judaism, he came 1500 miles to worship (at the feast).
 2. He knew that he would be allowed only in the court of the Gentiles, and must send his offering into the Temple by other hands.
- D. Now on return, he is reading the Prophet Isaiah.
 1. A thoughtful man, he is using the time—but not for business.
 2. The Temple worship has lifted him spiritually, and he continues to seek the will of God in His word.
 3. He reads aloud, perhaps to fix his attention, perhaps to instruct his driver.
 4. Unwilling simply to read and to pass by, he seeks the meaning—probably knows that this passage has given great concern to the scribes.

II. THE PREACHER MEETS HIM IN THE WAY.

Here some things the eunuch doesn't know.

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- A. That this preacher was selected of God because of his kindly approach to strangers. He is the one who has gone to the despised Samaritans.
- B. That an angel of God made this appointment with Philip while the Ethiopian was still worshipping in the temple at Jerusalem, and that Philip has been traveling a full day more to this place than he himself has traveled.
- C. That the Spirit has just commanded him, "Join thyself to the chariot."

(The preacher, not the prospect, is subject of angelic visitation.) "The Scriptures were opened to him by the ministration of angels and of the Holy Spirit, but all became effective to him through the words of the preacher" — *McGarvey*.

- D. "Understandest thou what thou readest?" — the preacher's wise question.

The understanding of that particular passage is a key to the man's faith and attitude. If a Christian, he will; if not, he won't.

III. THE TEXT.

God apparently knew he would be reading it.

IV. THE SERMON.

Beginning at the same scripture he preached to him Jesus. — by comparison with sermons of others, we know something of its content.

- A. It spoke of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, perhaps facing difficulties.
- B. It spoke of the life and person of Jesus, fulfilling these prophecies.
- C. It emphasized His atoning death, and His resurrection.
- D. Probably in this case it mentioned what Christ offers — "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female, but one man in Christ" (Gal. 3:28).
- E. It told what Christ commands — how else did the Ethiopian know of baptism?

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V. THE DECISION.

- A. It was his own decision, not forced upon him by another.
- B. It seems hasty for a thoughtful man—but mark what kind of a man he was.
- C. The facts were all in, established by the Word of God—what more to come?
- D. On those facts he made a decision, and on the decision he based immediate action. —To delay action unnecessarily is to break down the force to act.
- E. The necessity of faith (v. 37); its fact evident, whether or not in text.

VI. THE BAPTISM.

- A. They came to a certain water—perhaps in Valley of Elah, where David crossed to meet Goliath.
 - 1. Farther, in the Philistine plain, the Wady el Hasy, a year round stream.
 - 2. Many artificial pools, built to hold water for stock and crops through seven dry months, as Kentucky ponds.
- B. The action clearly described.

VII. THE RESULT.

He went on his way rejoicing.

- A. The Abyssinian church has traditions of his ministry in Africa.
- B. The inspired record closes with this . . . No more perplexing problems—He is the answer. No more weary pilgrimages—“Ye are the Temple.” No more sacrifices carried in by other hands—“You are a living sacrifice, acceptable” (Rom. 12:1, 2).

CONCLUSION —

O happy day that fixed my choice
On thee my Savior and my God.
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.
Happy day, happy day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.

THE CONVERSION OF A JUST MAN

(Acts 10)

INTRODUCTION —

“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

God and men see differently in many things.

There is no better illustration of the way of salvation through Christ, than in the case of Cornelius.

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN WOULD HAVE LED MEN TO THINK HE WAS SAFE.

A. A devout man — personally pious.

B. Feared God with all his house — traditionally religious as a Jew.

C. Giving much alms — Charitable with his fellowman.

D. Praying continually — an expression of religion and piety.

II. SEE THE EFFECT OF HIS CHARACTER.

A. His prayers were heard.

— It is not said that they were answered nor that they saved him.

B. He was remembered for his alms.

— There is no indication of salvation in either or both of these statements.

C. It is quite evident, however, that God thought such a man very much worth saving, and went far out of His way to make it possible that he should hear the Gospel.

III. THE CLEAR EVIDENCE IS THAT HE WAS NOT YET SAVED.

A. “He shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”

B. “Who, when he is come, shall speak to you.”

C. “Send to Joppa and bring hither Simon, whose surname is Peter, who shall speak words to you, by which you and all your family shall be saved.”

D. Man would ask why God didn't save both Himself and Peter a great deal of trouble by giving an immediate saving revelation.

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— the truth is that we have no scriptural evidence that any man ever was saved in that way, and consequently no assurance whatever than one can be thus saved.

IV. PETER PREACHED TO THEM CHRIST.

- A. Here is one reason the salvation could not come by immediate means.

It must come through an acceptance of the good news about Jesus, and so it was referred to one who knew it.

- B. The preaching of the Gospel was the basis for the action and acceptance on the part of the hearers.
- C. "There is none other name under heaven, that is given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

V. PETER COMMANDED THEM TO BE BAPTIZED.

This was the promised directive (see v. 6).

- A. They had already received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1. This was a sign of the fact that they were fit candidates for the kingdom, but it was not enough for salvation.

2. Here again God's way and man's diverge sharply.

- B. "Who can forbid water?"

There was enough water involved so that it was an item to be considered.

CONCLUSION —

How was this a conversion? A change?

- A. Cornelius surely did not change from being devout, prayerful, generous, and a spiritual leader in his home.
- B. Consider an analogy. We know a Pennsylvania woolen mill that produced excellent shirts and blankets. During World War II it was converted to war production. What did it produce? Shirts and blankets! But for the armed forces, rather than for the civilian market.
- C. Cornelius was not less new than the veriest sinner is new. Each is a new man in Christ Jesus, living in Him and for Him. To Him be the glory!

WHY CALL FOR A PREACHER?

(Acts 10:19-33)

INTRODUCTION —

The Apostle Peter still asked the little boy's question: "Why?" It was a good question, and it brought a remarkable answer.

A. The story.

1. Peter raised Dorcas from the dead in Joppa, and stayed there for a time.
2. Cornelius, at Caesarea, was instructed to send for Peter, who would bring him the words of life.
3. By a threefold vision, God prepared Peter to receive and communicate with Gentiles.
4. Peter received Cornelius' messengers and returned with them to Caesarea, some thirty miles along the Mediterranean coast.

B. Twice Peter asked "Why did you send for me?"

1. He asked the messengers when they arrived at Joppa (v. 21).
2. He asked Cornelius after Peter and his companions arrived at Caesarea (v. 29).

I. PETER'S QUESTION: A WISE APPROACH.

A. He wanted to know the assignment before he addressed himself to it.

1. God had already directed Peter to go, but where? and for what?
2. The present-day preacher, not thus directed, must also decide whether to go.
3. In any case, the ministry must be fitted to the need.

B. He wanted his hearers to see clearly their own motivation.

1. Folk often do good things for bad reasons; they need to clear up the reasons before they fail and the good things are no longer done.
2. Why does your church want a preacher? To fit the usual pattern? To lead in a program? To call on the sick? To pat hands and console the lonely?

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3. Cornelius' motivation was clear: he wanted to hear the God-given gospel (vv. 22, 33).
- C. Peter wanted to establish a relationship with his hearers.
 1. Their first welcome, "worshiping," was cause for concern (v. 25).
 - a. Too many Christians "worship" their ministers, then turn bitterly against them when they discover some human weakness, or cease coming to church when the minister moves on.
 - b. God, in Christ, must be the sole center and focus of worship.
 2. Peter's reply was and is needed: "I also am a man."
 - a. Not more than a man to be "reverenced," nor less than a man to be disregarded.
 - b. The saving power and divine quality was in the message, not the messenger.

II. CORNELIUS' REPLY: A WORTHY AUDIENCE

(v. 33).

- A. We are all here present.
 1. Many "kinsmen and near friends" were gathered (vv. 24, 27; 11:14).
 2. Cornelius was not one to see others starve while he feasted, physically or spiritually (compare v. 2).
 3. The preacher did not have to round up his audience; the hearers did that!
 4. Anyone's attitude toward the preached message will be much improved if he has brought a friend to hear it.
- B. We are present before God.
 1. God had instructed the gathering; He was present and they knew it.
 2. There was no problem with reverent behavior.
 3. When you enter God's house, it is well to greet your friends, but speak first to the Host, before whom you all are guests.
- C. We are present to hear.
 1. They were purposeful and responsible: they would gain much more from the gathering.

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2. They *attended* (gave attention in) that gathering. Attend to what is said!
 3. Peter had no need for a long, amusing "introduction" to his sermon.
 4. If speakers need training and preparation, so do listeners; just as your radio receiver needs to be operative before the broadcast does you any good.
- D. All things that are commanded thee of God.
1. It was an inclusive demand, and willingness ("all things").
 - a. They were godly folk, but they were still to hear new and unfamiliar facts of the Gospel, plus new and unfulfilled obligations (v. 48).
 - b. Nothing must be left out of the words by which they were to be saved.
 2. It was an exclusive demand ("commanded thee of God").
 - a. No place for a travelogue of Peter's trip through the Sharon Plain.
 - b. Did they know that God had needed to overcome Peter's personal inclinations? (He had admitted it! v. 28).
 - c. Another great audience, hearing Paul, "searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

CONCLUSION —

A responsible preacher rose to the occasion with a remarkable audience and made history. So the household of Cornelius heard the words of life; they believed; they received the seal of the Holy Spirit (God's approval); they were baptized into Christ; and the door of the Church was opened to the Gentiles.

Great things will still happen when folk assemble themselves in large, expectant gatherings, before God, to hear all things that God has given His messenger to speak.

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MARKS OF A GOOD MAN

(Acts 11:19-26)

INTRODUCTION — Who is great?

Paul was great; but he had a partner who was "good."

That designation available to us, even if the other is not.

I. RECORD OF A GOOD MAN.

A. Acts 4:36, 37 — Introduction: Joseph - given an honor name, "son of encouragement."

1. Levite—but different from the one who walked the Jericho road, and chose "the other side."
2. "Native of Cyprus"—Mediterranean island.
3. "Having property, evidently in Judea."
4. Sold (all of it?); brought the price and "laid it at the feet of the apostles."
5. Related to Mary, mother of Mark, whose home became a meeting place.

B. Acts 9:27 — Gained Saul's acceptance among disciples in Jerusalem.

1. Took Saul to the apostles—accepted here, Saul would be accepted by others.
2. Told of Saul's experience on Damascus road.
3. Told of Saul's bold and hazardous preaching in Damascus. — How did he know?

C. Acts 11:19-30 — Ministry in Antioch.

1. Sent by the Apostles to investigate.
2. Observed, rejoiced, encouraged.
3. Went to Tarsus and brought Saul.
4. Taught and built the church first called Christian.
5. Sent by brethren, with Saul, to Jerusalem with famine relief.

D. Acts 12:25 — 13:13.

1. Returned from Jerusalem with Saul and Mark.
2. Listed first (Saul last) among prominent teachers in Antioch.
3. Commissioned by the Holy Spirit and set apart by the church "Barnabas and Saul."
4. Went to his own native *Cyprus*, and there the lead changed hands!

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- a. Confrontation with Elymas the sorcerer—"Paul and his company."
 - b. Conversion of Sergius Paulus. (Mark leaves soon after.)
- E. Acts 14—In Galatia—Lystra: He was called Jupiter, Paul called Mercury.
- F. Acts 15—In Jerusalem reporting, insisting that Christ was enough—
1. Gentiles did not need to follow the rituals of Judaism.
 2. References are again to "Barnabas and Paul." Did the elders see in Barnabas the steadier influence?
- G. Acts 15:36-41—The controversy over John Mark.
—Barnabas and Mark go back to Cyprus; Paul and Silas on Paul's second missionary journey.
- H. I Corinthians 9:6 "Are Barnabas and I the only ones who need to work for a living?" Paul asks.

II. REFERENCES OF A GOOD MAN.

A. Attributes.

1. Full of the Holy Spirit—"Paracletes"—comforter.
—No record of any miracles—not associated with "tongues."
2. Full of faith—not in material things.
 - a. Faith in God.
 - b. Faith in God's people.

B. Attitudes.

1. Generosity, material and spiritual—Sharing with all.
2. Optimism, hopefulness.
3. Interest in the home folks—back in Cyprus.

C. Actions.

1. Saw—as he had seen in Saul, etc.
2. Rejoiced—in others' accomplishments.
3. Exhorted—from him the exhortation was accepted.

CONCLUSION — Much people added to the Lord.

"None greater than John the Baptist; but he that is least in the kingdom is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11).

"Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

PREACHING THROUGH ACTS
CONTENDING IN THE FAITH
(Acts 15:36-41; I Corinthians 3:1-6)

INTRODUCTION —

Even the Apostles had a touch of human weakness.

- A. Rough spots in the early Church become warnings.
- B. This does not take away from the inspiration of the gospel or the administration of the church.
- C. "Enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions" — are listed as works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20).
- D. Paul urges peaceableness (Phil. 2:1-4).
- E. When we come to know and do God's will perfectly, contention will cease.
- F. The growing family quarrels; the grown family should not.

I. THE PROGRAM OF THE APOSTLES

—to visit and encourage the churches.

- A. Both men were firmly committed to the Gospel.
 - 1. Paul, the apostle, with his vision of Christ.
 - 2. Barnabas, the generous — surety for Paul; partner in former journey.
- B. But their very zeal made possible the contention.
 - 1. There is no contention among those who don't care.
 - 2. There is no contention among slaves and puppets.

II. THE ISSUE — the choice of a partner for the journey.

- A. Personal issues entered only slightly — but too much.
 - 1. Barnabas never contended for himself, but here for a relative.
 - His very generosity was behind it.
 - 2. Paul considered that the work would be hindered by Mark's presence.
 - Lingering resentment over former defection.
- B. It was a question to which there could be no sure answer.
 - 1. A "thus-saith-the-Lord" would have cleared the matter.
 - 2. "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, in all things, love." — Now just what is essential?

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3. We sometimes fight most savagely to prove to ourselves that we are right, where we can't be sure.

III. THE CONTENTION—"SHARP."

- A. Of Peter's defection, "I withstood him *to the face*."
—There was no talking behind the other's back—nothing *anonymous*.
- B. Probably each thought it was principle with him, personal with the other.
- C. They retained respect and kindness for each other.
- D. They kept it in the family; it wasn't spread abroad.
- E. They proved their sincerity by godly life and work.

IV. THE RESULT.

- A. They did not allow personal slight to interfere with usefulness in Gospel.
—(President Lincoln, ignored at a ball by McClellan, refuses to relieve him of his command.)
- B. Another team went forth to preach.
"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife"
(Phil. 1:15-18).

V. POSTSCRIPT-RECONCILIATION.

- A. "Be angry and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Eph. 4:26).
- B. How was reconciliation accomplished? Perhaps not directly at all, but see:
"Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?" (I Cor. 9:6).
"If he (Mark) come unto you, receive him" (Col. 4:10).
"Send Mark, for his is useful to me for ministering"
(II Tim. 4:11).

CONCLUSION —

We have growing to do. The Church is to edify "the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

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TIMOTHY COMES TO CORINTH

(Acts 16:1-5; 18:5; II Tim. 1)

INTRODUCTION —

Churches speak of their Timothys, serving in many places. But where is the church that produced the Biblical Timothy?

- A. Much more is said of the people with whom he served, and the places to which he came.
- B. Acts 16 tells of a team ministry: Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke. It calls to mind others: Paul and Barnabas and Mark; Peter and John.
- C. Acts 18:1-5 reflects the results of a team ministry. The work is done, as each member contributes his own special skill to the total effort. Job descriptions are good, and necessary; but the essential element is personal, and not organizational or mechanical.
- D. II Timothy 1 reflects the personal qualities of the Paul-Timothy team.

I. CHARACTER THAT GROWS FROM FAITH.

- A. See II Timothy 1:5, 12, 13.
- B. II Tim. 3:10, 11 "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra" (where Timothy met him). —So the relationship provides an unsparing revelation of character.
- C. One becomes aware of "good faults," good-bad aspects of the same quality.
 1. (As "a squeal goes with disc brakes." And beauty takes a long time in the bathroom.)
 2. Some unyielding insistencies came with Paul's zeal.
 3. And some lack of aggressiveness came with Timothy's tender affection.

II. CARE AND PRAYER, BOTH WAYS.

- A. "Timothy my son" ("As a son with a father, so he has served with me in the gospel" — Phil. 2:19-23).

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE

“Remembering thy tears, that I might be filled with joy.”

- B. The relationship makes demands: Paul becomes responsible for things he doesn't do; Timothy “plays second fiddle.”
- C. The relationship brings privileges, blessings, benefits.
 - 1. Paul enjoys accomplishments he could not make alone (Who remembers Timothy at Corinth?)
 - 2. Timothy's errands became responsibilities and finally notable leadership.

III. CHOICE IN ESTABLISHING THE RELATIONSHIP.

- A. Paul knew Timothy's family, heard recommendations concerning him; invited him to go along.
- B. Timothy seems to have concurred in the agreement.
- C. Dual purpose: Doing the work and building the worker. Strangely, the two purposes are served together.

IV. CONFIDENCE (vv. 1, 13).

- A. Each must have confidence in himself.
 - 1. Otherwise the leader becomes like King Saul with David: jealous, destructive.
 - 2. Otherwise Timothy becomes restive and ambitious.
- B. Each must have confidence in the other.
 - You can't watch him all the time; that would stall the work.
- C. This confidence becomes loyalty and protectiveness toward the partner.
 - “I am a part of this ministry; my part cannot prosper without his.”

V. COMMUNICATION.

- A. Appreciation and prayer—includes memories and hope.
- B. Exhortation—Stir up the gift (v. 6); Guard the treasure (v. 14).

CONCLUSION —

Rewards are shared: “Not to me only” (II Tim. 4:8).

PREACHING THROUGH ACTS

THE CONVERSION OF AN ACTIVE MAN

(Acts 16:19-34)

INTRODUCTION —

We usually identify ourselves with the hero of a story. For variety, identify yourself with the jailer.

I. THE MAN YOU ARE.

A veteran of the Roman army—(garrison at Philippi; a Roman colony).

A. Given to obedience without question.

B. Given to action without delay whatever the occasion—

1. Your life has sometimes depended on it.

2. The occasions have sometimes been brutal.

C. Rome has shown you:

1. Might without mercy—the Empire demands it.

2. Ethics without morals. There are standards, but they concern what will serve the Empire.

3. Punishment without qualms for criminals and enemies.

4. Vengeance without limit.

Strange men come into your life.

II. INTRODUCTION TO PAUL AND SILAS.

A. Babblers teaching a strange doctrine that doesn't concern you.

B. "Salvation" is involved.

C. They are handed over for keeping.

1. In bad shape when they come.

2. Don't fit picture of common criminals—not cursing or reviling.

D. You obey, putting them in maximum security without asking why.

—Nothing here to keep you from sleeping.

III. THE EARTHQUAKE AND ITS RESULT.

A. At the awakening, things begin to concern *you*.

B. Security of prisoners is first care.

1. Inner and outer doors of prison found open; surely they escaped.

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2. Code of honor demands death before dishonor.
 3. The choice is prompt and automatic.
 - C. Then the cry—"Do yourself no harm; we are all here!"
 1. The reaction of a narrow escape—fear and trembling.
 2. Why did he do it?
 3. "What must I do to be saved?" (I'll do it promptly.)
- IV. THE COMMAND THAT REQUIRED TEACHING.
- A. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—(you can't salute and do that pronto.)
 1. Paul's purpose to prevent thoughtless outward action.
 2. Your friends are given the same promise you are.
 - B. "Spake [unto him] the word of the Lord."
 1. The *power* of Christ is all mercy—made men out of "cases."
 2. The *ethics* of Christ are all purity—in this He led.
 3. *Punishment* is borne by Him, for us.
 4. Vengeance gives way to "Father, forgive them."
—That is why the apostles cried out to save you!
 - C. Spake the word of the Lord to all in the house.
 1. Same Christ, on same terms for all.
 2. Infants obviously not included here.
- V. THE ACTS THAT FOLLOWED—washed their stripes!
- A. Were baptized immediately.
 1. Teaching of it was a part of "the word of the Lord."
 2. There was cause for delay here if anywhere—"untaught"—illegality—danger—*but there was no delay!*
 - B. Brought them into the house and set meat before them—hospitality, a normal expression of membership in Christ's body.
 - C. Believing and rejoicing.

CONCLUSION —

Buried with Christ and raised with Him, too.
What is there left for me to do?
Simply to cease from struggling and strife.
Simply to walk in newness of life.