

# The Book of Acts

April 6, 2025

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. The message this week is titled, "The Book of Acts." The scripture reading is Acts 2, 17-21. Thank you to Rhonda, Geoff, Don, and everybody else involved in the service. Happy birthday this week to Mike, Tess, Helen, and Don.

## Scripture Reading

Good morning. The Bible reading is taken from Acts 2 verse 17 to 21. In the last days, God says, "I'll pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will see dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I'll pour out my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I'll show wonders in the heavens above, and signs on the earth below. Blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will turn to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

## Sermon

Morning everyone. Morning. So glad to have you with us today. I must be a great preacher because we have someone who's come all the way from the other side of Canada to be here today. (Laughs) That's just a joke. Anyway, grateful to have everyone with us and it's wonderful to see good old friends again as well.

The Book of Acts is a tremendous book. There's some 28 chapters in this book and even though Paul is prominent in the Book of Acts, it's not just Paul. There's Luke who writes in the Book of Acts and Peter and others of this fabulous book. The focus, the teaching of Jesus, and it's left for us even centuries later today. It still gives me shivers to think that what we read now was said that many centuries ago and it's just as prominent as ever. The focus is the teaching of Jesus. And there's this man whose name is Theophilus. He is the recipient of Paul's writing. Of Paul's writing. And Paul was a peripatetic preacher. What's that? He was a walker. It's not like this where people gather and here's someone who wants to share some words. No, that didn't happen. He was a walker. He'd go from village to village, town to town, city to city and he would be proclaiming the word of the Lord. So the apostle, Paul, doesn't really appear until about the eighth chapter in Acts. But when he does, he comes with a bang.

In 22, chapter two, men of Israel, listen to this, Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did among you as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God, set purpose and foreknowledge and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross but God raised him from the dead for it was impossible, it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

That's the beginning and the story that is overwhelming and it continues to surge and surge and surge all throughout the book of Acts. And he comments like this, therefore, let all Israel be assured of this. God made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ and when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and all the other apostles, what shall we do?

And the reply from Peter is repent. So word we don't use very often, repent. I'm sorry, I'll do better, I wanna change. Let all Israel be assured of this. God has made this Jesus whom you crucified both Lord and Christ. Repent and be baptized every one of you for the mission of your sins and you'll receive the gift of God's Holy Spirit. So then what happens next? Like what would, if we were there, what would we do with all this information?

Well, it says they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayer, kinda like what we're doing today. And all the believers gathered together in sharing food with one another, coming together with one another. And so as the Acts continues, these words are precious. Salvation is found in no one else for there's no other name under heaven by then which must be saved. And when they saw the courage of

Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished. And they took note that these men have been with Jesus.

And every once in a while, I think all of us, whether in a Bible class or a sermon or something else, there is this amazing feeling that we are part of history. What happened back then can even happen now because it says they called them in again and asked about what Jesus was talked about. Further threats by the authorities didn't bother them. Didn't matter. They would gladly give their life for the fact that others might know who Jesus is.

And so it says after a lot of wrangling back and forth, he says, "Now Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand, heal and perform miraculous signs. And after they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken." And I don't know if you've ever had that experience. Sometimes there's this profound sermon by someone or something event and it just grabs us to the core saying, I will believe in Jesus for the rest of my life. He created us and I'll be with him forever. And that's for us even today.

So there were people who opposed all of this, but they prayed and the place where they were meeting were shaken. It gave them strength to continue to preach. So they shared with one another. They helped one another. They spoke to one another. And then he says, "Day after day, in the temple courts, from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ." So we do this every Sunday. They were doing it every day. They shared with it. They believed it with all of their heart. And I'm thinking inside, they're thinking, what's gonna happen tomorrow? Every day, something is absolutely special. This new thing called Christianity.

People understanding who Jesus was and is, and even so today. So day after day, in the temple court, and from house to house, they never stopped. And then they gathered together, choosing different people to go to different places to share. And so the word of God spread. And it says, "The number of the Christians, disciples, increased rapidly, and a large number of their priests, became obedient to their faith." They went from the old law to the new law. The presence of Jesus Christ in each of our lives, every single day. Started back then, hasn't stopped yet. It's continuing.

But there was always this persecution. There was always these political things that were getting in the way. In chapter eight, we hear of a man who was a persecutor. His name was Saul. And he turns out that he changes his name to Paul, who becomes the greatest proclaimer other than Jesus.

Throughout the rest of the Bible, Paul stood in the presence of God, sharing scriptures even when they're persecuted. On that day, great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except for the apostles were scattered. So that's one way to get preaching different places. We're getting tortured here. Okay, you go here, you go here, you go here, you go there. You go to Nova Scotia, you go to Alberta, you go to British Columbia, preach the message. So on that day, the persecution started to ramp it up, but Paul seemed to know that that was going to happen.

And so there's some interesting stories that take place. It says now, an angel of the Lord said to Philip, who was also a believer, he says to appear, he meets an Ethiopian, and he says, "The important official in charge "of all the treasury of Candace, "Queen of the Ethiopians, "this man had gone to Jerusalem to worship "and on his way home was sitting on his chariot "reading the book of Isaiah." It's almost like pulling your car over on the side of the road and say, "Well, I'll just stop and maybe read a little bit." And that's what happens. Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you're reading?" Philip asked. He said, "How can I?" Unless someone will explain it to me. And then he did. And he talks about Jesus. He was led like a sheep to be slaughtered as a lamb before the shear silent. So he didn't open his mouth. In his humiliation, he was deprived of justice. So who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth. And then it says, the eunuch said, "Tell me, who is the prophet talking about?" Now as they traveled along, explains more and more about Jesus. And I think if we lived multiple lifetimes, we still can learn more about Jesus.

So here's this man who's Saul, who used to oppose Christians, who now is a Christian. And he says, "Paul, this is my chosen instrument "to carry my name before the Gentiles and the kings, "before the people of Israel. "And I will show them how much I have to suffer "for all of this." And as you know, through the Apostle Paul who writes the majority of the New Testament, he is thrown in prison many, many times. He gets out, he continues to preach even, even day after day after day, knowing that he's gonna be put back in prison.

So in this book of Acts, we meet various people, Cornelius, a variety of other people. And then he says, "It's true that God "does not show favoritism, "but accepts people from every nation "who fear him or love him and do what is right. "You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, "telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, "who is Lord of all." And he goes around doing good. And so Peter says, "Can anyone keep people "from being baptized with water?" And so the baptism begins. And then in chapter 11, "The apostles and brothers throughout heard "that the Gentiles had also received the word of God, "Jew and Gentile alike, coming together as one, "sharing in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

And then the miraculous things that take place, thrown in prison, I don't know how many times, I never really added it up, how many times Paul was in prison, let go back and forth and back and forth. It just seemed to be his occupation, because he's not gonna stop proclaiming the word of the God. And he proclaimed the word of the Lord from Old Testament and bringing into the new. So it's remarkable what's taking place in this wonderful book. And then he says, "We are bringing good news, "telling people to turn away from those evil things, "God who made heaven and earth and sea "and everything in them. "In the past, let all nations go their way. "Yet he was not left himself without testimony. "He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven "that provides the fruits in the fields."

And then he says these words, "The apostles and the elders "met to decide these questions of discussion." And they got up and here's what he said, "Brothers, you know that some time ago, "God made a choice among you "that the Gentiles might bear and hear from my lips "the message of the gospel. "And to believe that gospel, "God who knows the heart showed that he accepted them "by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as they did to us. "He made no distinction between us and them "for it purified their hearts by faith." And so do we. Faith. Faith.

The faith that he gives us. The faith that we can have. The faith that we can share. It's so interesting to look back at the Old Testament that comes into the New Testament and all these sharings for and more. It's so, and says, "He then brought, he brought them together. "And one said, what do we do?" And here's what they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. "You and your household. "Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him "to all the others in the houses. "And at the hour of that night, "they washed his grooms, "they washed his wounds from prison, "brought them into the house and took care of them." And it says, "And the whole family believed in God."

This wonderful book, it's not without pain, it's not without confusion, it's not without anxiety, it's not without sorrow. But that's not the best. And it's not the worst. It's here's what happened. But our faith will remain strong. I suppose every person here gone through very difficult circumstances, wondering how are we ever gonna get through this? And yet, God is strong. He's with us every moment of the day. And brothers and sisters can come together and to share with one another, helping one another. And this church is a marvelous church for caring and taking care of people.

But it seemed like in this wonderful book, Paul and others are being persecuted just by being a Christian. And he said, "I too was convinced that I thought "I could do everything possible to oppose Christianity. "I went from synagogue to synagogue "and I tried to force them out. "In my obsession against them, "I even went to foreign cities to persecute them." And then these words, "About noon, I was on the road. "I saw light from heaven, brighter than the sun, "blazing around me and my companions. "And we all fell to the ground. "And I heard a voice saying in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? "It's hard for you to go against the gold. "Then I asked, who are you, Lord? "I am Jesus." Can you imagine? I am Jesus. That's all that needs to be said. I'm Jesus. From the very beginning, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, Jesus, who says to them and says to us today, "I will

never leave you. "I will never forsake you. "I am always with you, "even if you don't feel like that he is, he is. "God never breaks a promise. "I am with you always."

So this is how Paul somehow can get through these remarkable, difficult situations. And I suppose all of us have gone through many, many difficulties and many challenges. But let me just close with these last words in the book of Acts. It seemed like the Apostle Paul would be thrown in prison because of being a Christian, and then he'd get out. And a day later, he'd throw him back in and then get back out and go to a different place and preach back in prison. He was a remarkable man. He knew that he was gonna be difficult for him. And we all know that there are difficulties in our life. And so Paul's gonna preach, but he's gonna preach under guard.

Three days later, he called together the leaders of the Jews. And when they had assembled, Paul said to them, "My brothers, although I have done nothing wrong "against our people or the customs or ancestors, "I was arrested in Jerusalem "and handed over to the Romans. "They examined me and wanted to release me "because I was not guilty of any crime, "especially deserving death. "But when the Jews objected, "I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, "not that I had any charge "to bring against my own people. "For this reason, I've asked to see you "and talk with you. "It's because of the hope of Israel "that I am bound by this chain." Didn't bother Paul.

Paul was gonna preach to people along the roadside. Paul was gonna preach in the temple. Paul was gonna preach in jail. Paul was gonna preach when he got out of jail. And Paul knew that one day, someday, it'll be his turn to see Jesus face to face. We don't really know exactly what happened, but the majority of scholars suggest that outside of the prison gates and outside on the streets, Paul was executed. And that was 2,000 years ago.

Paul gave his life for the sake of us. Jesus gave us life because of what he's done for us. So this wonderful book, this peripatetic preacher, going from place to place to place to share the gospel message to everyone, it's a little different today, but there's a lot of ways in which we can share. Just sharing with one another. And thank goodness that we have scriptures that'll hold up the truth in what we need to have. May God bless you today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your life. Amen.

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