

The Acts of the Apostles

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[0 : 00] It's great to be back with you. If I'm meeting you for the first time, I'll give you a quick 60-second summary of our testimony. I pastored 15 years in Ohio and went on a missions trip. One missions trip turned into six missions trips. Four of those were with the ministry we now serve with called Worldview Ministries, an independent Baptist scripture translation ministry focused on the unreached people groups that do not even have one verse of scripture in their language.

And so we serve with a scripture translation ministry. God has blessed our ministry by giving us nine Bible translation projects in six different countries.

We have projects in India, Uganda, China, Tibet, Myanmar, a brand new project in the country of Iran, which isn't quite brand new anymore. It's about a year and a half old or so.

And after 11 years, we've given two people groups, their very first New Testament, one for a people group in Africa. And then since being with you in January of this year, we gave a people group in Myanmar, their very first New Testament.

And so if you have any questions about our ministry, we'd love to answer those. But I just wanted to give you that if I'm meeting you for the first time. My wife, Amy, is right over here. And two of our five boys, we have Chad and Cooper, and then our adopted daughter, Cammie, is also visiting with us today.

[1 : 25] And the last time I was here, it was just me. And so I'm glad that you have the opportunity to meet Amy. And again, we're so glad to be here this morning.

I'm going to invite you to take your Bible's turn to Acts chapter one, Acts chapter number one. And I want to again thank pastor for this privilege. It's hard. It's difficult.

It's challenging to schedule meetings on Resurrection Sunday. And so we are just worshiping with you today. But the privilege to be included is special, especially since I pastored 15 years.

And it's just a special treat for me to be able to open God's word on Resurrection Sunday and to worship with you in that way. Acts chapter one and verse number one.

The Bible says the former treaties have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. And of course, that is a reference to the book of Luke.

[2 : 26] And I think you'll agree with me if the book of Luke is a record of all that Jesus began to do, then the book of Acts is what? Well, it's a record of what Jesus continued to do through the lives of his followers.

We call them disciples. The world would label them as Christian later in the book. Verse number two. Until the day in which he, Jesus, was taken up.

After that, he, through the Holy Ghost, had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen, to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

The title of our devotional this morning is just simply this, the Acts of the Apostles. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you for the privilege of meeting on this day.

We're thankful we serve a risen Savior every day of the year. But on this Lord's Day, this Sunday, we celebrate our risen Savior.

[3 : 41] And we're thankful for those who have come out during the Sunday school hour. And I pray your blessings upon them. Bless our time of Bible study. We'll thank you for it in Jesus' name.

Amen. Really, the text that we could have read this morning was just the title of the book that is before you.

And that is Acts. I didn't think that would necessarily be appropriate just to read one word as our text this morning. But that really is what we want to focus on.

Some of you may have a Bible where the title of this book is the Acts of the Apostles, right? And so we want to talk about that for just a moment. And here's the question this morning.

Why did the apostles act? Why did they act? Well, I want to just give you a few reasons from our text this morning on why the disciples acted.

[4 : 41] Why did they witness? Why did they pray? Why did they start churches? Why did they evangelize? Why did they become witnesses?

Why did they become one who told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth? So help them, God. Why did they act? Here's some reasons from our text. Number one, they had perfect and precise scriptures.

Notice with me verse number one and verse number two. The former treaties have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. That's a reference to the book of Luke. Verse two.

Until the day in which he was taken up after that, he, through the Holy Ghost, had given what? The commandments, right? And then commandments under the apostles whom he had chosen.

And so these words, teaching and commandments and speaking, they're all references to the word of God. And so here's one of the reasons why the disciples acted.

[5 : 46] Because God's words were true. Over 300, I don't know the exact number, over 300 prophecies came to fruition regarding the birth and the death of Jesus Christ.

If we were to go to the great resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, we would find in that text these words that Jesus died according to the what?

The scriptures. He was buried according to the scriptures. He rose again the third day according to the scriptures. Now, listen, all of God's word is pure.

All of God's word is precise. It's perfect. But I am so thankful that I live in this day as opposed to the day of the prophets.

The day of the prophets, they were giving God's word ahead of time looking towards the future. But we have the complete word of God.

[6 : 47] And we look back on the past and we can show a lost and dying world that God's word is pure. It's perfect. It's precise. God said exactly what he meant.

And everything he said came to fruition. That's encouraging to me. We don't have to go out into the world and tell people what is going to happen.

Jesus has already been crucified. He's already been buried. He's already risen again. Amen. And so we have that joy and that privilege.

Why did the disciples act? Well, number one, they had perfect, precise scripture. Number two, why did the disciples act? Well, number two, they had the power from the spirit, power from the spirit.

Look at verse four and being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the father, which saith he, you have heard of me.

[7 : 47] Verse eight tells us, but you shall receive power. After that, the Holy ghost has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth.

I was taught in Bible college that the book of acts could be just called the book of acts. It could be called the acts of the apostles. It also could be called this, the acts, listen to this, the acts of the Holy spirit in the lives of the apostles in light of their risen savior.

That's a big title for the book of acts. We could just summarize that in one word acts, right? But one of the reasons why the disciples acted is because in chapter two, the Holy spirit came right and controlled them.

And, uh, and, and basically, uh, the, the word, uh, they were filled with the Holy spirit means controlled by the Holy spirit. Like someone can be filled with anger or controlled by anger.

They were controlled by the Holy spirit and the controlling of the Holy spirit in their lives caused them to do what? Tell people about Christ. Why did the disciples act?

[9 : 02] Because they were controlled by the spirit. They had the power of the, of the Holy spirit. So why did the disciples act? They had perfect, precise scriptures.

They had power from the spirit. Verse three, they had a planned strategy. Verse number eight, we just read it, but you shall receive power.

After that, the Holy ghost has come upon you and he shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and under the uttermost part of the earth.

Why did they, why did the disciples act? Why did the apostles act? Because of a commission, we call it the great commission.

They simply acted because why church family? Listen, because they did what Jesus told them to do. What a novel idea. They simply did what Jesus told them to do.

[9 : 58] Take the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the uttermost parts of the world. By the way, the book of acts is a record of that. This verse number eight really is an outline of the book of acts in chapters one through seven.

We have Jerusalem in chapters eight through 12. We have Judea and Samaria and chapters 13. The first missionaries were sent out from the church and they went to the uttermost parts of the world.

Listen to this. And by chapter 17, they literally, this is the world's description. Christian turned the world upside down for the cause of Christ. We would say they turned the world right side up for the cause of Christ.

But my point is this. They had an influence. They had an influence. Why? Because they simply did what Jesus told them to do. Why did the disciples act?

I'm building up to one point. Okay. Um, they had the scriptures. They had the Holy spirit. They had the great commission.

[11 : 00] But then lastly, well, let me give you one more. They had a promise of the second coming. Verse nine. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up and a cloud received him out of their sight.

What goes up must come down. Jesus is coming again. Right? And so we need to get busy. We need to, to be diligent doing what Jesus has told us to do.

But let me give you one more. This is really my point this morning. They had proof of a savior. They had proof of a savior.

Look at verse three to whom also he showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs being seen of them 40 days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Listen, why did the disciples act? Well, yes, they had the Bible. Yes, they had the Holy spirit. Yes, they had the great commission.

[12 : 04] But can I say this? All of that is in vain. If Jesus did not rise again from the dead. I heard a story one time about a Muslim man that turned from Islam to Christianity.

And all of his friends and family questioned him about that in a very high pressure way. And they asked him, how could you do this?

And this is what he said to him. He said, imagine he thought about it for a moment. And then he gave this analogy. He said, imagine you're walking down the road and you come to a fork in the road and you don't know where to go.

And there are two men there that you can ask for direction. One is dead and one is alive. Who are you going to ask?

Jesus, right? Jesus, right? Up from the grave. He arose. Joseph Smith is still in the grave. Charles Taze Russell is still in the grave.

[13 : 09] Buddha is still in the grave. Muhammad is still in the grave. Only Jesus up from the grave. He arose. Jesus was dead. And now he's alive.

Why is the book of Acts called Acts? Simple. Jesus was dead. And now he is alive. And so why, why, how do we apply this to our lives this morning?

Well, everything that the disciples did and the followers of Christ, everything they did in the book of Acts was because of the resurrection. And here's the point.

If the disciples had a reason to act, we do as well. We do as well. I was a children's pastor six years. And one time we had a vacation Bible school and we brought in about 500 children from the community.

Some of these children, the majority of them, bus kids that knew nothing about the Bible. One of the things we did that week is we had a puppet show that told the story of David and Goliath.

[14 : 26] And on the last day of the vacation Bible school, David in the puppet show, he killed Goliath. I was walking down the hall when the doors opened to the room of the puppet show and all of these young people started exiting.

They started leaving the room to go to their next station for the vacation Bible school. One little boy that knew nothing about David and Goliath knew nothing about the story of David and Goliath.

He comes out of that room, jumping up and down, saying this. He won. He won. David killed Goliath. David won. In a small way, but really in a spiritual, more significant way. We have every day of the year the opportunity to go out in a lost and dying world and say, Jesus won. He won. He's no longer dead.

He's alive. And we can be as excited about that, if not more, than that little boy was about David killing Goliath.

[15 : 35] We have a reason to act. If the disciples had a reason to act, we do as well. The great commission for you and I to go into a lost and dying world is God's will for our life.

The commission to go out into a lost and dying world and did what you all did Saturday morning yesterday to be salt and light and a witness.

That is God's will for our life. It is our marching orders. It's our reason for existence. Someone might say this. Well, Brother Bill, I exist to bring glory to God. And you would be absolutely correct.

The Bible teaches that. We were created to bring glory to God. But let me ask you a question. What does that mean? What does it mean to bring glory to God? You could ask probably 10 pastors, maybe get 11 different answers.

I don't know. Here's my take on what it means to bring glory to God. It means that you and I exist to reflect and reveal before a lost and dying world, the moral attributes of God.

[16 : 37] That is God's will for your life. That is God's will for my life. In our actions and our reactions. That one's a little more difficult sometimes. You and I exist to reflect and reveal before a lost and dying world, the moral attributes of God.

Well, how do I do that? It's really on one hand, very simple, but we take a lifetime to learn it. We do so by acting like Jesus. If I want to show the world what God is like, I simply act like Jesus.

That's why the disciples and the followers of Christ were called little Christ. The little they were called Christians in the book of Acts because the world looked at them and said, huh? They're just acting like that Jesus guy.

And so that is why we exist. That is God's will for your life. That is God's will for my life. Really, we exist for this reason that men may see our good works and in turn glorify our father in heaven.

That's why we exist. Here's a bold statement. I say it all over the country when I have opportunity, but we'll wrap it up after this.

[17 : 46] There's only one reason why God has given you another year on this planet. There's really only one reason why God has given you another month, another week, another day, yea, verily another breath.

And that is to tell people about Jesus. That is God's will for our life. And so it is the reason why the disciples acted. And it's why you and I should act as Jesus has commanded us to act.

When's the last time we handed out a gospel track? When's the last time we invited someone to church? When's the last time we shared the gospel with someone? I forget about this, but I know in my head there is power in the message of the gospel.

When we tell a lost soul that Jesus died for them, was buried and rose again, and we communicate that to a lost and dying person, the Bible says there is power in the gospel.

So when we communicate those truths to a lost person, Jesus, through his word, through the message of the gospel, can do something spiritual in their heart, in their lives.

[19 : 03] We just have to give it. I can't save anyone, but I can sow the seed. I can share the message. I can go out into this world and say, he won.

He won. Jesus is alive. He defeated Satan. He won. He won. I can go out into the world and I can do that. And when I do that, God can do something spiritual and powerful in a lost person's life.

And so the question is this, are we acting? If the disciples acted like some of us, I'm including myself, the book of Acts would not be called the book of Acts.

It would be called the book of apathy. Because so many of us don't do what Jesus told us to do. Why did the disciples act? Because Jesus was dead and now he's alive.

And that's the same reason why you and I should act as well. Father, we love you. Thank you for the privilege of studying your word this morning. Lord, I did not give any truths that these dear folks have not heard before.

[20 : 12] But I know in my life I need to be reminded of my marching orders. So many times in my life I lose my joy because I'm not doing what I was created to do.

We can't lose our salvation, but we can lose our savor. We can lose sight of our purpose, that we are salt, that we are light, that we are witnesses, that we are ambassadors for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Even today, help us to go out into a dark, sinful world and reflect and reveal the moral attributes of you through your son, Jesus Christ.

And we'll thank you for it in Jesus name. Amen. Amen.