

Teaching Acts – 3 of 3

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[0 : 00] Thanks, Robin. Well, we're going to take up, we're going to move through Acts, and I'm just going to say, as I said yesterday, a little bit about each preaching section, and hopefully we'll get to the very end this morning.

So we need to have nimble fingers and focused minds. So we start in Acts chapter 7, chapter 6 to 8. So I'm going to be going back to week 9 on your outline.

So I'm going to be using this as our basic structure. You already have that. That was handed out to you on Monday. And I'm now looking at sermon number 9, the first martyr, Acts chapter 6, verse 8 to 8, verse 1.

And here we have, right at the end of the primarily Jerusalem-focused Jewish-Judean period of evangelism, Peter, the primary apostle, the election of the seven deacons, one of whom was Stephen.

And now Stephen is confronted with those who are in opposition to him from the synagogue of the freed men. And this brings him to the Sanhedrin. And the question is, do we stand with the Sanhedrin and their understanding, or do we stand with Stephen?

[1 : 08] The charges against Stephen are listed there for you in chapter 6, verse 13. They're quite familiar charges. This fellow never stops talking against the temple, this holy place, and against the law.

Blaspheming God by speaking against his temple and blaspheming, if you like, Moses, bringing into slander Moses by speaking against his law.

Now those are the two charges. And it's quite clear here, therefore, that there is a relationship between Moses and Stephen. If you look at chapter 6, verse 15, all who are sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

So Stephen of the shining face, as Moses, of course, was of the shining face, because God is with Moses. And just as God is with Moses, he is with Stephen. Now Stephen, again, as he is before the Jewish tribunal, the Sanhedrin, again is on the front foot.

He does not act like the accused. He is on the attack. And he defends himself, and he's on the attack against the nation and its representatives. And he takes up first the issue of blasphemy against the law and against Moses.

[2 : 20] And he tells the Sanhedrin things they already know. But he collates his material and shows that Joseph was rejected. He shows that the nation rejected Moses.

And now, if you look at verse 37 of chapter 7, he says, this is that Moses who told the Israelites, God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.

Now notice what's happened. Joseph comes. His brothers sell him into slavery. And when they see Joseph a second time, they recognize him as their deliverer.

Moses is rejected when he comes to Egypt. But when they see him a second time, they recognize Moses as their deliverer from Egypt.

Christ has come once. You will see him a second time. That is the hidden message. And you will then reluctantly recognize that he is the deliverer whom you have rejected.

[3 : 20] So you accuse me of blasphemy against Moses. And yet you have rejected all God's servants, including Moses yourself. And what about the charge being a blasphemy against God by speaking against this holy place?

I simply want to tell you, he says, throughout his speech, that God is the God who is on the move. God cannot be localized. Verse 2, he was in Mesopotamia with Abraham.

He was the God who was in Egypt with Joseph. He was the God in Canaan with the patriarchs. He was the God at Mount Sinai with Moses. And even Solomon said of him, verse 48 of chapter 7,

However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men.

As the prophet says, heaven is my home and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord? Or where will my resting place be?

Has not my hand made all these things? And the reality is that you have localized God in the temple. And yet you have accused me of blaspheming this holy place, which you yourself have idolized.

[4 : 36] Even though God is the God, Yahweh is the God who is on the move. Blasphemy against Moses, you have brushed aside all of God's prophets. Blasphemy against God, you have idolized this temple.

And you have substituted a building for Yahweh. And now you have even brushed aside the Christ, the prophet who comes like Moses. And then he doesn't try and get on side with them.

In fact, he takes all the derogatory Gentile terms and he applies that to the Sanhedrin. Verse 51, you stiff-necked people with uncircumcised hearts and ears.

You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit. Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the righteous one. And now you have betrayed and murdered him. You have received the law that was put into effect through angels, but you have not obeyed it. And so they, typical of their nation, brush Stephen aside, just as they had brushed Christ aside.

[5 : 44] But God's cause will triumph. Because even here, chapter 8, verse 1, Luke introduces us to Saul. And Saul was there giving approval to the death of Stephen.

For God's cause will triumph. We may brush him aside, but the arch persecutor of the church will become the apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it may well be that your point of contact here is that Israel's history is one of brushing aside God's messengers and brushing aside God's own righteous one. Have you ever been brushed aside?

We don't like to be brushed aside. When we're young men, we don't like to be brushed aside by a girl that we might be interested in. We don't like to be brushed aside by a potential employer.

We don't like to be brushed aside when we're after a scholarship. But here, the brushing aside is of a much more horrendous nature. They brush aside the prophets.

[6 : 40] They brush aside Moses. They brush aside the righteous one himself. Well, now, that may be, it's a very long passage. But the idea is that someone said that the essence of preaching is summary.

And you therefore need to summarize the main movements. And that's how Stephen responds to the two charges against him. OK, over to number 11, sermon 11 now.

We've looked at number 8. Sorry, we've looked at number 10, the expansion to Samaria. But let's now come to the surprising conversion. And this is repeated.

The sermon that I do here will be on chapter 9, chapter 22 and chapter 26. As I said before in our overview at the beginning, this is a most significant conversion. And of course, the apostle Paul was the one who had the call from the man of Macedonia to take the gospel into Europe.

And so the first European convert, Lydia, hears the gospel from Paul's mouth. And this is a most significant conversion. Martin Luther, of course, in reading Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 117, said that he felt the gates of paradise open when he realized that righteousness was not only God's requirement, but God's provision.

[7 : 53] Remember when Luther was asked, do you love God? He said, I hate God. Ask the average Muslim, do you love Allah? They'll always say, no, I don't love Allah. I don't put love and Allah together. I respect Allah.

I reverence him. I fear him, but I do not love him. Luther said, I do not love God because he saw that righteousness was God's requirement. But he came to love God when he saw that righteousness was also God's provision in Christ.

And through Romans 117, that was used for the beginnings of the Reformation. And then John Wesley, of course, had his warm heart experience when he heard Luther's introduction to Paul's letter to the Romans.

And then his brother, Charles, I think we take that song for granted. Probably the greatest hymn of all hymnody, the hymn that begins, and, and can it be?

And Charles is converted through reading Luther's commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians. So here is a most significant conversion. Irrational opposition, as we saw last time from the religious in the haven of parochialism, chapter 22, and the secular pagan mind.

[9 : 02] You are insane. Chapter 26. The Lord Jesus here in chapter 9 confronts his enemy. I am Jesus, he says, whom you are persecuting, verse 5 of chapter 9.

And notice here that the point of the narrative is that Jesus reveals himself to Paul as the son of God, and Paul is turned around completely.

Now, don't overlook this. So far in Acts, a beggar is healed. Those closest to the miracle say that Jesus did it. An Ethiopian treasurer is changed.

Now, a hardened opponent of the gospel of the Lord Jesus turns around, and verse 20, at once he begins to preach that Jesus is the son of God. And the apostle Paul never got away from grace and from the lordship of Christ because he had experienced it firsthand.

When I was here last year for the EMA, each morning I would walk across the Millennium Bridge on my way to St. Helens for the EMA meetings.

[10 : 10] And in that week, as I looked up at the Dome of St. Paul's, there was a banner around the dome, and it said, Make Poverty History. I wondered if next week, if I'd come back, there'd be another banner that says, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

Somehow I doubt it. When we went down south for a bit of a break, everywhere we went, we went to all sorts of cathedrals, and I would pick up the diocesan paper. One night I'm reading the diocesan paper from the cathedral we had visited, and I thought, there's something wrong here. So I started to count. There were nine references to Bob Geldof. There was one reference to Jesus. He was on the back page in an article which was written by a freelance journalist.

Friends, it's far too easy for us to allow our unique contribution to slip through our fingers. Paul never lost his focus on Jesus.

Jesus, the Son of God. The grace that brings us into relationship with God. And from the very beginning, Paul, like Isaiah and like Kent Hughes, as you heard last night, his conversion was his commissioning.

[11 : 26] Now here you are cleansed. Now go and serve me. And I wonder if there is biblical warrant for you to see that your conversion is your commissioning.

He has made you his people in order, Peter says, that you may declare the wonders of him who called you from darkness into light. Well, the conversion of Saul itself is great proof that Jesus lives and he reigns.

And Paul's single-minded focus on the preaching of the gospel is a great encouragement to us. And his own experience of conversion and commissioning is a great reminder to us as well.

12th sermon, God's expansive purpose. Chapter 10, verse 1 through to 11, verse 18. On the way, we've had a look at this as well, so I won't say too much about it. But just notice a few things that Luke, the narrator, emphasizes.

Just have a look at chapter 9, verse 43. Just of interest as we move through. We are told for the first time here that Peter was staying in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

[12 : 28] That's interesting. Chapter 10, verse 6. We are told he is staying with Simon the tanner whose house is by the sea. Chapter 10, verse 32. Cornelius repeats that.

He says, and he is the guest. Send for Simon. He is the guest in the home of Simon the tanner who lives by the sea. He said, don't bring the tanner back with you. Bring Simon the apostle back with you. But he's staying with the tanner.

You know from your reading that a tanner was seen to be an unclean activity. And actually tanners were banned from the precincts of Jerusalem. Because they were dealing with animals and they were dealing with skins and all that sort of thing.

Isn't it symbolic, therefore, ironic that Peter should receive his vision about clean and unclean activity in the house of a tanner? Now you notice that when Peter gets to Jerusalem to tell the Jerusalem brothers where he's been, just have a look at 11, verse 5 and see what he tells them. He says, I was in the city of Joppa praying and in a trance I saw a vision. Oh yeah, we know more than that, mate. You were in the house of a tanner, but you don't tell the Jerusalem brothers that. Just an interesting little side remark.

[13 : 38] Now go back to Mark chapter 7. Mark chapter 7. And here you remember that Mark, the author of his gospel, Peter is his primary reference.

Peter is his primary source. It is in this context in Mark chapter 7 that Jesus says what goes into a man comes out of him and can't make him unclean. Verse 17 of Mark 7.

After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. Are you so dull, he asked, don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean?

For it doesn't go into his heart, but into his stomach and then out of his body. Bracket. In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean. It may well be that Peter is telling Mark this and he's saying, you see Mark, in saying this, Jesus is saying, declaring all foods clean.

And therefore what applies to food, Peter is now being taught by God, applies also to people. He is to go without question to the house of Cornelius.

[14:42] And the apostle to the Jews is to take the gospel to the first Gentile group who will hear the gospel from a Jerusalem source. And so you see that in chapter 10, verse 34, I think this is the core verse.

I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism. God is concerned for the salvation of the lost. 16 out of 22.

Remember that figure. 8 out of 11 direct words from God contain the word go. Nobody is off limits. The prop forward, stiff arming the opposition.

God is pushing the church. God is far more focused on the lost than the church is. And so we've got to keep that in mind. That when we are together as a group of people, we keep in mind the needs of the lost.

So we never assume that the gospel shouldn't be preached even in a Christian setting so that God will call more of his elect to himself. The hidden hand, chapter 12.

[15:50] It's a wonderful chapter. We immediately go to dark days for the church. As I said earlier, 75 verses to the martyrdom of Stephen. Now one verse to James, verse 2 of chapter 12.

He had Herod, had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. The key here seems to be chapter 12, verse 5. So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

J.C. Ryle has preached a great sermon on that in one of his books, that fifth verse. So the church was, Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

However, lest we be tempted to put our trust in prayer, like prayer changes things. God changes things. Do not put your trust in prayer.

Luke could have told us that Peter, in response to the church's praying, was remarkably delivered. Oh Lord, the church said, deliver Peter from prison. And Peter was delivered from prison.

[16:48] And he came to the house of Mary where the church was praying for him. And he knocks on the door and Rhoda comes out and realizes it's Peter. And she's so excited, she runs back inside and says, it's Peter at the door.

And the church says, yes, Lord, we believe that he's there and now you've redeemed him. And they say, Rhoda, you're insane. He couldn't be there. That's probably his angel.

Meanwhile, we are told, verse 16, but Peter kept on knocking. Was it believing prayer? You see, they were praying. This is the early church that we need to get back to.

They were praying, but they were not believing. And yet God delights to hear the prayers of his people. And he releases Peter from prison.

Well, it's remarkable that in chapter 12, verse 7, the angel comes to Peter in prison. He strikes Peter on the side, wakes him up and says, now get up on your feet. If you go over to chapter 12, verse 23, exactly the same words are used of the angel of the Lord striking Herod down.

[17:51] He strikes Peter up, get up and go. Then he strikes Herod down. And Herod is eaten by worms. And he dies. The man who denies food to Tyre and Sidon, verse 20, becomes food for worms.

And the chapter ends, a chapter which began with great darkness, the death of James, Peter imprisoned, now Herod dead. But the word of God continued to increase and spread.

He is the God of the hidden hand. James' ministry is over. God takes him home. Peter still has work to do. We know why Peter is released from jail, because Peter has yet to stand before the Jerusalem council in chapter 15 and make a very important contribution to their debate.

Just go over to chapter 18, verse 10. And it's a great reminder to us where Paul is in Corinth. And one night, an example of the direct word of God, the Lord spoke to him in verse 9, chapter 18.

Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent. Don't be scared. Keep on speaking. Keep on speaking. For I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city.

[19 : 10] Many people who do not yet know the gospel, do not yet know me, but they are of the elect and I'm going to call them in as you preach to them. So Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them the word of God.

It is great comfort. Peter still had work to do. God said, you are completely safe until your work for me is done. And then I will call you home.

Now, this is a remarkable passage, chapter 12, because we see the God of the hidden hand. The point of contact for the sermon. The world's consolations, well-intentioned as they may well be, are empty.

For example, you hear them if you mix around after a funeral. Well, she had a good inning, someone will say. Oh, well, whatever will be, will be. Do we have anything more substantial to say? We will all face statements like this. I'm sorry to tell you that we have lost her. I'm sorry. The news is not good. I'm sorry to have to inform you. They are all confronting statements that we will have to face.

[20 : 15] The church in Acts chapter 12 faced similarly dark days. But the necessary application of this chapter is that the God is the God of the hidden hand and he is to be trusted.

No matter how dark things appear, God will always act to glorify his name and advance his gospel. And our response to that is calm trust. We are safe and secure until our work on earth for the gospel is complete.

God's greater purpose than our safety on earth is his glory through the fulfillment of his plans. His messengers come and go and then enter into their eternal reward. But God's gospel moves on beyond the fringe.

On Psalm 116 verse 15, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. Hear what Spurgeon says. They shall not die prematurely.

They shall be immortal till the work is done. And when their time comes to die, then their deaths shall be precious. The Lord watches over their dying beds, smooths their pillows, sustains their hearts and receives their soul.

[21 : 24] God watches over you. He is the sovereign God of the hidden hand. His concern is that you finish your work and then he will take you home.

He will see his work go on strongly. But the word of God continued to increase and spread. Notice also that there's just this interesting sidelight.

When the people treat Herod as though he is the voice of a God, not a man, as they're about to do with Barnabas and Paul in Lystra. And remember when the people want to recognize that they are Greek gods, they tear their cloaks and run out and say, we are men like you.

There's no such response from Herod immediately because Herod did not give praise to God. An angel of the Lord struck him down and he's eaten by worms and died.

It is a good reminder to us that God is a jealous God for his honor and glory and will not share the spotlight with human pride. If you've got any deaf people in your congregation, you'll know that the deaf language is often a very vivid way of illustrating biblical truth.

[22 : 35] The deaf language, sign language for jealousy is this. You grit your teeth, you take your little finger and you screw your little finger into your teeth.

He is jealous. Jealousy of is a dreadful thing. Jealousy for is what God is about. He is jealous for his glory and he will not share his glory with any puny king like Herod.

And he is struck down and dies. I try and read one systematic theology a year. And this year I'm reading the one, the new systematic theology for the Christian church by Robert L. Raymond.

It is a great book, R-E-Y-M-O-N-D. Listen to this one paragraph. Do evangelical ministers want genuine renewal in their churches?

Surely they do. Then they must continually cry out to God publicly from their pulpits and privately for that brokenness of spirit before him that alone he honors with his animating presence.

[23 : 42] They should plead heaven for new depths of humility before him, that he might regale them with his power from on high. And when his spirit does empower them, they must be true to the reformed faith in their church planting and church growth methods.

Not to do so will incur the divine displeasure for hypocrisy. It's a wonderful chapter and it's in the section in which he's dealing with the authority and duties of the church and how ridiculous it is for the church to go and run away to church growth methods and business principles.

Humility. New depths of humility. Well, let's move on into the next series now. So you'll need the next piece of paper. And we come to series number two.

And the theme of this series is the unstoppable gospel. So we've done our first series and we've had a break in between. And now we come back to the unstoppable gospel.

And the first sermon here is our mother church, chapter 11, 19 to 30 and chapter 13, 1 to 3. Now, chapter 11, 19 takes us back.

[24 : 52] If you just look at verse 19. Now, those who are scattered by the persecution in connection with Stephen. So it takes us back to chapter 8, verse 1. And we see that these people were scattered, scattered out.

And verse 20, some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. And if the gospel is powerful for Greek and non-Greek, Jew first, then Gentile, then if it works for a Jew, it will work for a Greek.

Verse 21, the Lord's hand was with them and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. And so here is our mother church. It's the first Gentile church.

And therefore, if you're a Gentile, I guess it's our mother church. Notice when the brethren in Jerusalem hear that God has established this work amongst the Gentiles, they make a very sensitive appointment.

Verse 22, news of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they send Barnabas to Antioch. So Barnabas comes to Antioch. And note, there is no mention of circumcision.

[25 : 54] Barnabas is not concerned to get these Gentiles circumcised so that they can be true Christians. Rather, he sees what an overwhelming ministry he has, and he remembers Saul.

And he brings Saul from Tarsus, and the church is discipled by Barnabas and Saul. And the one who discipled the church, what he has rubs off on the church. And what do you notice about our mother church?

I think one of the overwhelming characteristics of our mother church is its generosity. First of all, notice here in chapter 11, verse 27. During this time, the prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch, and one of them named Agabus stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world.

Our mother church gave attention to the prophetic word of Agabus. They didn't treat prophecies with contempt. And notice that their response, verse 29, to this need, the disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. Their response was financial generosity to the word which had come to them from God through the prophet Agabus.

[27 : 05] Chapter 13, verses 1 to 3, tells you again a brief glimpse into the life of our mother church. Notice the leaders. There is Barnabas listed first, Simeon the African, Lucius of Cyrene in Asia, Menean, who is from the household somehow of Herod, so he's had a very good upbringing, and then there is Saul listed last.

The Holy Spirit speaks to them while they are fasting and worshipping, and as a result of his speech to them, there is a generous response with their human resources.

They take their founding pastor and his assistant, not one without the other, but both of them, and they send them off. They are a well-taught church, sensitive to God's word, generous in response to God's word, and friends, this is our family tree.

This is our family tree. Listen to God, respond generously to what God says. This is our family tree. I had a father, his name was Cook, and my father taught me one thing in the Christian life, he was not a wealthy man, but if you had a financial need, my father would do everything he could to meet it.

Be generous, he taught us. My wife's father, whose name was Roe, was an equally generous man, but generously spirited. So if you came to the Roe family, you would be treated like a long-lost friend, you'd have a beer can thrust in your hand, you'd have an arm go around your shoulder, and you'd be saying, it's good to meet your mate, come and have a barbecue with us, we love poms here, etc.

[28 : 46] And so very often that spirit of generosity, when we were raising our children, we would often say to them, be a cook or be a Roe, according to the circumstances.

Here is our family tree, all of us. Be an Antiochian. Listen to the word. Be generous. There is nothing more unattractive than a closed-handed Christian, who's been treated so generously and yet is so lousy.

All right. Second sermon. What's in a name? We now are off on the first missionary journey.

Chapter 13, verse 4 to chapter 14, verse 28.

Names are interesting. Notice here that as they go out, they go out the two messengers as Barnabas and Saul, and they go to Barnabas' home area, Cyprus.

Soon, however, the order of Barnabas and Saul to Saul or Barnabas, or Saul or Paul and Barnabas, will be reversed. But it is just interesting as a sidelight, perhaps a useless fact, that the only reference to King Saul in the New Testament comes to us from Saul before he becomes or just after he becomes Paul.

[30 : 08] Also notice that in chapter 13, verse 9, we are told, then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elimas.

And so it is in this interaction with the Roman proconsul Sergius Paulus that Paul becomes Paul from being Saul.

Isn't that interesting? Is it to say that Paul is on the same level of status, as it were, as the Roman proconsul? And then we meet this man, Elimas, whose name is also Bar-Jesus, literally son of Jesus.

And yet Paul says to him, Bar-Jesus, Bar-humbug, verse 10, you are Bar-devil, Diabolos. You see the use of the name.

You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right. You don't even come near to your name. Great literature always has layers of meaning.

[31 : 10] And so we see the use of names here by the narrator, Luke. He could have just ignored the names, but here he's making an issue of telling us the names of those involved.

Well, we see the conversion of Sergius Paulus in Cyprus. They go to Pisidia in Antioch, and Paul preaches a classic sermon to the synagogue. There is a divided response.

And then they go off to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, where Paul heals the crippled man. He addresses the people when they want to make them gods. There are close parallels with Peter. Peter, chapter 3, heals the crippled beggar outside the precincts of the temple in Jerusalem.

Now we find in chapter 14, verse 8, Paul heals the man who was lame from birth outside the pagan temple of Zeus. He's in pagan territory.

There are close parallels also with the Lord Jesus. This is Paul's coming out into ministry. Jesus comes out into ministry and he confronts the devil. Paul comes out into ministry and he confronts the child of the devil.

[32 : 13] Paul goes into the synagogue at Nazareth and is rejected. Paul goes into the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, chapter 13, verse 45, and is rejected.

Jesus comes and heals a paralytic. Paul heals the lame man at Lystra. The crowd are fickle. There is a strong connection between Jesus and Paul.

Paul is Jesus' messenger. He is carrying on the work of the Lord Jesus and his message. The crowd is fickle. Verse 22 tells us, Paul tells them of the realistic expectation, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith.

We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. They said, go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God. Christian ministry will be hard.

Keep communicating the gospel. There will be opposition. But chapter 13, verse 48 underlines all our work. When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.

[33 : 23] To every spiritual advance, there is an unequal opposite force at work. And we are seeing it here. But God's purposes will triumph.

What is the way in here? Australians love nicknames. If an Australian gives you a nickname that is offensive, the more offensive the nickname shows you, the more affection the Australian has for you.

If an Australian calls you a real buffet, then you know the Australian likes you. Australians are like that. But the British are somewhat like that as well.

At our son's school, there was a sergeant major who had been in the British army. And when all the parents turned up for our son's first day at the school, the sergeant major, who was responsible for authority and discipline in the school, entered the assembly.

And he said, I want you to know that I know the name of every boy in this school. And there are 1600 boys in this school, he said. They're all called Sunshine as far as I'm concerned.

[34 : 26] Sunshine, do this. Sunshine, do that. And you see, look at names. Did you know that the ICC has released a press media release?

And it's come out and got significant publication in Australia. That it is banned in all cricket matches that there be any sense of barracking or racial vilification.

That's fair enough. But now we are being told that it's appropriate to call the English cricketers pommies, but don't add any adjectives. We can't even, we can't even call it.

And one fellow said, I didn't know that there was such a word as pommy. I thought it was just one word, pommy bastard. You can't question their parentage. Now, can you imagine, can you imagine the effect on the Australian crowd on the hill of the Sydney Cricket Ground Hill when you're told you're not allowed to call them pommy bees?

It's like a red rag to a bull, isn't it? So the name, I'm not suggesting you use the word bee, but the name, you can go into bee. Okay, over to Acts 15. Things which go without saying need to be said.

[35 : 39] It goes without saying that I love my wife. It needs to be said. It goes without saying that I love my children. It needs to be said. It goes without saying that I love my parents.

It needs to be said. It goes without saying that the Gospel will reach the ends of the earth under the sovereign superintendency of God. it goes without saying that that gospel needs to be the one true gospel so it needs to be said go to Galatians you keep your finger there in Acts 15 go to Galatians 1 6 to 8 because it gives you more of the background to the problem here Galatians 1 6 to 8 I am astonished the apostle says that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel which is really no gospel at all evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ but even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you let him be eternally condemned as we have already said I say it again if anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted let him be eternally condemned chapter 3 verse 1 you foolish Galatians who has bewitched you before your eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified I would like to learn just one thing from you did you receive the spirit by observing the law or believing what you heard they're so foolish beginning with the spirit are you now trying to attain out your goal by human effort that is the very situation that has happened some of the Judaizers Christian Jews go down to Antioch and they tell the

Antiochian Gentile believers the rather disturbing news you've got to be circumcised to be a true Christian the debate is engaged and here is Peter's last contribution to the narrative of Acts and his summary verses in verse 11 of chapter 15 we believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved just as they are James says that this is quite consistent with what God has said that the Gentiles will be in his people and then the letter is issued urging the Gentile believers to stay away from pagan temple activities this is a chapter about asserting the truth of the true gospel it is a chapter about unity and yet notice the irony of verse 36 it is a chapter in which we see a fallout disunity between Paul and Barnabas over their relative attitudes to John Mark it is a chapter about notice non-circumcision and what an irony it is that in the very next chapter chapter 16 verse 3 Timothy is circumcised

Paul wanted to take him along on the journey so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area for they all knew that this his father was a Greek and so before you preach another sermon on timid Timothy remember that Timothy here at about the age of 18 without razor blade is circumcised for Paul's circumcision was a non-issue Timothy probably felt more personally about it than that but notice he is circumcised for the good of the gospel notice here we are seeing that the apostle Paul is an iron rod when it comes to incorporating things into the gospel but he is a reed in the wind when it comes to a matter of indifference which circumcision has become we must not take the gospel for granted the gospel is not Christ plus anything not Christ plus baptism not Christ plus confirmation not Christ plus dress sense not Christ plus political allegiance not Christ plus food laws a friend of mine in a major church in Australia an Anglican church on a very large intersection has a big sign outside of his church and it announces when the services are held and in big bold lettering it says you're welcome one day he turned up to church and someone with a big red pot of

paint sprayer had put in a word a graffiti word just two letters across the word you're welcome I F your welcome here is conditional you're welcomed if the truth of chapter 15 is that through repentance whatever state you are in without any precondition you can come to God now by grace and have life full abundant and complete in Christ and you are welcome in the fellowship of his people well the five city tour point four I'll stop it's 10 o'clock we're halfway there Robin before we get on to the five city tour so do we want to you want to yes okay we're just going to have a two minute break Tim do you want to come on down Tim yeah and you want me to talk to Tim about the book okay two minutes just to give you a break I've written a lot of this material into a book on acts which is coming out with proc media Tim is the editor tell us about the book where it is Tim it's this material filled out and put in a format so that you can prepare some so you don't get a final sermon but you get all the working to be able to produce that sermon I found it personally so edifying just editing it and I'm sure you will so tell us the outline of each chapter of the book there's three parts it begins with the expositor thoughts if you like the issues of the text listening to the text so that we will first listen to what

God has to say to us into the churches understand that and then from that then do the next step which is moving from text to teaching so how do you go about teaching it and under that heading we look at issues like point of contact big questions theme aim etc so it's a book for preachers so tomorrow we're going to have a debate about whether we should talk about teaching or preaching okay yeah and then the last section and then last section is proclaiming a message I think it's very important there that there's a text to be explained but there's a message to be proclaimed and so the second part is about distilling down the message that you're going to bring to your congregation and then each chapter has a Bible study for group work that's right on the passage within that and you can then so there's a preaching outline and then there's a teaching outline in you know Bible study context and both of those are under the heading of proclaiming the message okay thanks Tim and a good opening joke well there's something to open up with suggestion yeah okay rightio sermon number four the five city tour or the second missionary journey this goes from chapter 16 verse 6 through to chapter 18 verse 22 it begins with the vision of the man of Macedonia Europe come over to Europe come over to Macedonia and help us notice that the first port of call is Philippi a commercial center then on to Thessalonica in chapter 17 which is the first port city and I think that's important to keep in mind when preaching on Thessalonica and especially the exhortations in Thessalonians it's a port city the Bereans of more noble character chapter verse 10 of chapter 17 and then Paul is into and each place notice chapter 7 chapter 17 verses 10 to 15 is severe Jewish opposition then Paul goes into Athens the philosophical and intellectual center of the ancient world and he shows great sensitivity notice in his sermon to the or his speech to the Areopagus and then he goes to Corinth the center of wickedness chapter 18 verses 1 to 22 notice again in this context chapter 18 verse 9 I'll read it again one night the Lord spoke to Paul don't be afraid keep on speaking don't be silent for I am with you and no one is going to attack and harm you because I have many people in this city so Paul stayed for a year and a half teaching them the word of God Paul was a man on a promise friends the gospel is in a fight and the gospel I would think in the minds of many it starts as the underdog the gospel is boxing above its weight it is going to the intellectual capital of the world it is going to confront hard-nosed businessmen at commercial centers of the world it is going into a wicked red light district it is going into a wicked center of pleasure how will the gospel go in his book preaching and preachers on page 129 Martin Lloyd-Jones tells us speaking at the university mission at Oxford in 1941 he preached at St Mary's Church to a congregation full of students he said I preached to them as I would have preached anywhere else at question time afterwards someone criticized the sermon that sermon could have equally well been delivered to a congregation of farm laborers or people like that Lloyd-Jones responded I regarded undergraduates and indeed graduates of Oxford University as being just common human clay and miserable sinners like everybody else and held the view that their needs were precisely the same as those of the agricultural laborer or anyone else I had preached as I had done quite deliberately there is no greater fallacy than to

[45 : 41] think that you need a gospel for special types of people the gospel of Europe's farmers is the same gospel as that for the philosophers in Athens or the merchants in Corinth the gospel is powerful in every setting belief and opposition are the fruit of the ministry the messenger must persevere in the task with confidence in God to do his work do I persist in the face of opposition to the gospel what is being refuted here the gospel is not up to the task of converting men and women in this sophisticated technological advanced prosperous post-modern world the gospel needs to be

recast for 21st century sophisticated that is rubbish the gospel is boxing above its weight and it goes on in triumph through this five-city tour sermon number five a model ministry chapter 18 verse 23 the end now of the missionary journeys or sorry this is the third missionary journey chapter 18 verse 23 through to chapter 20 verse 28

Paul now comes to Ephesus it is his last church plant remember that he is primarily a missionary he is a church planter this is his last church plant chapter 19 tells us that he enters the synagogue verse 8 for three months and then he goes to the hall of Tyrannus for two years and verses 11 and 12 Luke tells us what's happening God did extraordinary miracles through Paul so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them when we met with John Wimber his theological advisor a man by the name of Jack Deere said that is the model for ministry a chapter 19 verse 11 sums up what we're bringing to Sydney we are looking for an act led revival signs and wonders and then following that up with the gospel now it's interesting here that the apostle Paul in this context faces opposition it is commercial opposition from the silversmiths at

Ephesus and he has to move on it is also interesting that here we have the indication of the sons of Sceva and their activity just as Jesus had raised the widow of Nain's son Jairus's daughter and Lazarus if you go and Peter had raised Tabitha from the dead now the apostle Paul comes to Troas have a look at this in chapter 20 verse 7 now Paul in the apostolic line the Lord Jesus raised the dead Peter raised the dead now Paul in no sense an inferior apostle on the first day of the week we came together to break bread Paul spoke to the people and because he intended to leave the next day kept on talking until midnight there were many lamps in the room whether we were seating where we were meeting seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on I love the way Luke writes he just didn't nod off I mean he was in a deep sleep mate he was sleeping uh and he emphasized he was sound asleep right it's a deep sleep and he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead Paul went down threw himself on the young man put his arms around him don't be alarmed he said he's alive then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate after talking until daylight he left the people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted I'd love to go home with the young man what was it like and what did they give him something to eat what happened

I want to know more about it but here is Paul also raising the dead now we come to the only speech in Acts which is delivered to a Christian audience Paul's address to the elders of Ephesus and so here we have the engagement of Paul with the leaders from the church verse 17 from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus to the Presbyterian church that the elders should come down to meet him there it is it's elders friends it's elders that's what it says when they arrived he said to them you know how I lived the whole time I was with you and what Paul does here is that he rehearses his ministry for the elders why they knew what he'd done they'd been with him for at least the two and a quarter years he's telling them what he's done so that they can do it too and we knew what he did Luke's already told us in chapter 9 he could have said look you know what I did look back at the previous scroll but here is Paul's interpretation of what he did and he's telling them the things that he did in order that they might duplicate those things now look at what he tells them he did verse 20 you know that I have not hesitated to preach anything but have taught you publicly and from house to house I have declared 21 to both Jews and Greeks 24 the Lord Jesus has given me the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace 25 now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom verse 27 I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God there are six English words there springing from four Greek words preaching verse 20 teaching verse 20 declaring verse 21 testifying verse 24 preaching verse 25 proclaiming verse 27 and that's what he tells them he was doing amongst them if you take acts 19 as your model for the acts led revival is it not interesting that when Paul rehearses his ministry in acts 20 he makes no reference whatsoever to acts 19 verses 11 and 12 the signs and wonders phenomenon in other words he's saying this is what you are to duplicate it is primarily a word based ministry he goes on he says I remind you that you are watchmen keep watch over yourselves verse 28 and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood I know that after I leave savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth and draw away disciples after them so be on your guard remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears Paul sees himself as shepherd he sees himself as watchman if you like this is the upper room

discourse of the apostle Paul look at verse 36 when he said this that he was going to Jerusalem he knelt down with all of them and prayed they all wept as they embraced him and kissed him what grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again then they accompanied him to the ship it is a remarkable section just by the way I think it is good for us as preachers to notice that in verse 21 Paul is always declaring to Jews and Greeks the need for repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus that is always the bottom line of where he is heading and notice also that Paul the great preacher is also the great visitor house to house in verse 20 I think that's one thing I'd want to say that I didn't say about the church scene in Australia last night that I think pastoral visitation virtually has gone and I think it is a great lack and we need to be visiting house to house if we had a change if we had a change in our churches people must know that we love them and God showed that he loved us by coming and visiting and we need to visit people well what's the big idea of this section shepherding God's people

consists of persistency in the face of opposition preaching teaching proclaiming declaring testifying publicly and privately to the need to turn to God and repentance and have faith in the Lord Jesus the dominant picture here is the shepherd image the flock bought with the blood of Christ the shepherd and appointed overseer the wolves savage and unremitting will draw people away point of contact when we're in parish ministry I once interrupted our children who were playing a game of church four of them three girls and one boy at that time I thought this is interesting I'll just stand outside the door and listen to how they play church our eldest daughter was playing me dad I was the pastor and she was calling the others who's going to move a motion anybody second it all in favor say I against no the eyes have it the motion is carried to my children a Presbyterian children to my children they had followed the model of me as the chairman of a meeting our children pick up models very easily much to our embarrassment in every area deficient models abound on the sporting field in parenting in business in church leadership what then does a model Christian ministry look like here is a model Christian ministry I think as I look in the church of Australia in Australia today there is a lot of trivialization of weighty issues when I used to go visiting to our local hospital in

[55 : 06] Sydney it was called the Western Suburbs Hospital I'd always turn up and parking was at a premium but there was a parking area just outside the main door of the hospital and it had a big sign reserved for doctors I always parked there and I was always ready if someone was going to come and say hey you can't park there that's for doctors only I am a doctor I am a doctor of souls a doctor to the eternal I was ready every time but they never asked me and we've lost that emphasis we are a doctor of the eternal we are a doctor of souls so the necessary application of this passage are we being faithful shepherds of God's people are we recognizing our accountability it is his flock are we sensitive to the warnings of scripture what sort of a model ministry am I following and do I provide in what way does the apostolic model challenge my motives my character my strategy and my lifestyle okay oh Jerusalem Jerusalem point six acts 21 to 23 the movements here notice Paul comes to Jerusalem he arrives in Jerusalem he meets with James there is a riot Paul addresses the crowd there is a further riot he then is taken to the Sanhedrin he has to be rescued from the Sanhedrin there is a plot to kill

Paul and he has to be rescued there on four occasions in this narrative Paul is in a hopeless situation from which he needs to be rescued the Jerusalem riot the first one the commander of the local garrison of the Romans rescues him then there is a further riot and the commander comes and rescues him again when he goes to the Sanhedrin there is another riot and the commander comes and rescues him again and then there is a plot to kill Paul and the commander comes and rescues him again on four occasions Paul needs to be rescued just flip over if you would keep your finger there and look at Romans chapter 15 Romans chapter 15 verse 30 to 32 Paul is praying asking the Roman believers to pray for him in his struggle in his ministry look at what he asks them to pray verse 31 and he's probably written this during his ministry at Corinth in chapter 18 pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints their answer yes he was rescued in fact he was rescued four times who rescued him the commander of the Roman garrison and the Roman garrison rescued him point two for prayer points so that by God's will I may come to you in Rome with joy and together with you be refreshed the God of peace be with you all did he come yes he came via shipwreck by via snakebite but he came he came as a prisoner but he came God answers this prayer and these prayers but he answers in surprising ways now flip back if you would to Acts and notice in 23 verse 11 there is

another example of a direct word Paul says in chapter 20 just by the way that he feels compelled by the spirit to go to

Jerusalem and here he is being rescued and notice in 23 verse 11 the following night the Lord stood near Paul and said take courage as you have testified about me in Jerusalem so also you must testify in Rome so Paul Paul is reassured by God himself that he will eventually through all these rescues come to Rome the big idea of this section is that God directs the church's mission he sustains the missionary and he sees that his purposes will be fulfilled God himself is the guarantee of the fulfillment of his word and the success of his mission and the dominant picture in the narrative here is that on four separate occasions Paul is rescued from a fairly hopeless situation rescue from an unlikely quarter out of a hopeless situation is the dominant picture and I reckon if you want to look at something like that that sort of tension I reckon you can do no better than to go to William Goldman's book *The*

Princess Bride do you know it have you played it numbers of times to your children have you read it to your kids *The Princess Bride* do you know what I'm talking about have you watched it with your children it's the most wonderful story in *The Princess Bride* William Goldman has a character by the name of Inigo Montoya do you know what I'm saying does anybody relate to this yet hello my name is Inigo Montoya you killed my father prepare to die and there is that wonderful tension that runs through until he finally finds the man with six fingers on one hand who killed his father and he finally avenges his father's death but it is just a most interesting book to read and a video to watch there is great tension now here the plot of Acts has Paul coming to Jerusalem being subject to much opposition on four different occasions the tension of the story is maintained and the question is will he survive Jerusalem it's only one heart that is beating and will he finally make it to Rome to the ends of the earth and that dominates the landscape of these chapters sermon number seven trial upon trial Acts 24 to 26 there is the trial before Felix Acts 24 the trial before Festus Acts 25 and the appeal to Caesar the appearance before Festus as an Agrippa in 25 and 26 Paul is declared innocent of the charges against him look at chapter 24 verse 5 chapter 24 verse 5 we have found this man to be a troublemaker Romans didn't want troublemakers he's stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world he is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple so we seized him now that is the charge that is being made against him have a look at chapter 23 verse 29 chapter 23 verse 29 and here is the letter from Claudius the commander to Felix the governor I found that the accusation had to do with questions about the Jewish law but there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment go over to chapter 25 25 and here you have the word of Festus I found he had done nothing deserving of death but because he made his appeal to the emperor I decided to send him to Rome chapter 26 verse 32 Agrippa said to Festus this man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar what was God's word to Paul chapter 23 verse 11 you will come to Rome it will be fulfilled along the way Paul has opportunity of testifying but notice that he has been declared innocent on three separate occasions what is the dominant picture here in this section we have strange contrasts contrast number one prison is a place generally associated with guilty people but here Paul is declared three times innocent but he continues to be put in prison the contrast too is that Paul is the accused before the tribunal but he doesn't ever act like the accused his primary concern doesn't seem to be his own safety or his own acquittal there is no self pity about him he's a man on a mission he is to testify and that is what he does in every arena at every opportunity that God opens up for him strange contrasts an innocent man in jail an accused man on the attack one of our vice principals at college is a lawyer and I went and talked to him about this

I said explain to me double jeopardy oh double jeopardy is a principle of British law and justice that a man or a person cannot be tried for the same crime twice here Paul is declared innocent three times but the trials go on here is triple jeopardy so the vice principal took me to his legal library and got down the life of Samuel Johnson by Boswell he said it reminds me yes of the a little interaction in the life of Johnson and he read it to me in response to the solicitor general for Scotland who said but sir truth will always bear an examination Dr Johnson replied yes sir but it is painful to be forced to defend it consider how you would feel though you are conscious of your innocence to be tried before a duty for the same crime every week it would be ridiculous Paul never seems to tire under the load of such unjust persistent examination he keeps testifying in the face of great antagonism how great is God to sustain such a testimony under such difficulty he is a man on a promise the necessary application is that Paul the testifier has great courage persistence and clear focus on the resurrection trusting in God to fulfill his purposes this is a model of testimony to believers of every

age possible application we are to be testifiers and our testimony is never unaccompanied opposition can be persistent but must be met with persistent faithfulness we must not be embittered by injustice but trust in the just God and get on with ministry Calvin on the synoptic says the more brightly the light of doctrine shines so as to press more closely on wicked men they are driven to a greater pitch of madness but we must continue on no man is fit to preach the gospel said Calvin seeing the whole world is set against it save only he which is armed to suffer and brothers that's us through many dangers toils and snares I think we're up to number eight now chapter 27 to chapter 28 verse 10 Paul now is through the man-made trials and comes to the natural catastrophes it is late in the season it is not a good time to be traveling verse 7 we made slow headway the wind did not allow us to go we moved along verse 8 with great difficulty much time had been lost notice it's late in the season the centurion verse 1 Julius is in charge of the imperial regiment they sail despite Paul's advice then Paul is visited by God again chapter 27 verses 23 to 25 last night an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me and said don't be afraid Paul you must stand trial before Caesar and God has graciously given you the lives of all who sail with you Paul is now firmly in charge Jonah runs away from God to sea and is cast overboard into the sea Paul is not running away from God he's in the center of God's purposes he is safe on board and all who stay on board with him will be saved chapter 27 verse 37 tells us that they numbered the numbers on board so that they could just check that everybody was saved and there were 276 of us on board and everyone was saved now you see here an incredible structure of how the center of authority and influence swings from Julius and the ship's owners back to Paul but I want you to notice just in passing here that on five occasions in Acts Paul receives a direct word from God at his conversion on the

[67 : 29] Damascus road from the vision of the man of Macedonia and then on three occasions let's just look at them chapter 18 verse 10 I have many people in this city so do not be afraid chapter 23 verse 11 the Lord stood near Paul after the violent reaction of the Sanhedrin to assure him that he must get to Rome chapter 27 verses 23 and 24 the angel tells him he must come before Caesar and all who sail with him will be safe each message is prefaced by these words look at chapter 18 verse 9 do not be afraid 23 verse 11 take courage 27 24 do not be afraid I think we feel that Paul doesn't need to be told this he's a man who's just a man of steel he needs to be told it don't be afraid because he's likely to be take courage because he's likely to lose it don't be afraid these messages come at a time of great personal need they are gracious timely encouragements from God and each has the effect of promoting unusual perseverance FF Bruce says Paul strikes as a man possessed of uncommon strength of will not easily turned aside from the path which he believed it to be his duty to follow true though that observation may be Paul needed encouragement and in his darkest days God saw it and graciously met it what a privilege to be able to say with him the God whose I am and whom I serve I think the outstanding thing about the Apostle Paul is not necessarily his strength of purpose or his single minded but he lived his life and conducted his ministry as a man on a promise in Australian political history our equivalent of the Chancellor of the Exchequer is our Federal Treasurer we've had two Federal

Treasurers recently who believed that they were on a promise that they would be the next Prime Minister Paul Keating claimed that he had a promise from Bob Hawke the Prime Minister that he would be Prime Minister the promise came to nothing Peter Costello our present Treasurer claimed this year that John Howard had promised him our Prime Minister that he would be the Prime Minister the promise came to nothing it evaporated is there a lesson here for Gordon Brown we are not talking friends about any empty self-serving political whim or rhetoric Paul was a man on a promise a promise guaranteed by the faithfulness of God himself in the midst of crisis God's word sustains his messenger so he stands out as the serene leader in times of stress I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me so Paul really is the anti-type of the superhero all superheroes shine in the darkest of circumstances and Paul is no exception there the superhero draws on superior power superior ability superior strength or superior knowledge all within himself Paul shines for no apparent reason unless what he says about God is true Paul's strength lies outside of himself in fact when he is at his weakest he is at his strongest God's word is the foundation of Paul's confidence God's spirit is the source of Paul's boldness God's son is the single-minded love of Paul's life knowing Christ and making him known is what life is all about according to Paul Paul is a model of childlike dependence he is a model of a man highly esteemed by God who is humble and contrite and who trembles at God's word finally unhinderedly chapter 28

verses 11 to 31 Paul comes safely under sail to Rome notice that the ship on which Paul sails verse 11 after three months we put out to sea in a ship that had wintered in the island it was an Alexandrian ship and Luke tells us he doesn't have to tell us this but he tells us with the figurehead of the twin gods

Castor and Pollux brothers sons of Zeus Castor and Pollux were the gods who looked after seafarers what an irony that Yahweh has brought Paul through the storm through the court cases through the shipwreck through the snake bite and he arrives in Rome under the figurehead of these two foreign brothers these two demigods but it is other brothers who are so meaningful to Paul verse 14 there we found some brothers not Castor and Pollux who invited us to spend a week with them and so we came to Rome and there the brothers had heard that we were coming and they travelled as far as the Forum of Appius and the three taberns to meet us at the sight of these men Paul thanked God and was encouraged when we got to Rome Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guide him the Jews meet him in the ghetto in Rome you can still find the place allegedly where Paul was under house arrest if you walk roughly from the Vatican to the Colosseum along the banks of the Tiber River all of a sudden you come to an area and you realise that though you are in Rome you're surrounded by synagogues and kosher butcheries you are in the Jewish ghetto one of the oldest Jewish centres in the world and there is an old church there and there is a plaque on the foot of the church that it is here on this spot that Paul spent time in Rome under house arrest so here he is and when the Jews come and meet him he assures them that his ministry has been to Jews they are his Jewish brethren the same race that he's not there to stir up political trouble for the Jews even though the Jews have been opposing him from morning verse 23 till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and from the prophets and again his persuasive ministry is mentioned I just want you to notice this the number of times Luke talks about Paul's ministry and says that it was a ministry of persuasion chapter 13 verse 43 and the sermon at Pisidian Antioch Paul sought to persuade them chapter 17 verse 4 at Thessalonica to the Corinthians in chapter 18 to the Ephesians in chapter 19 he sought to persuade before King Agrippa and now here in Rome verse 24 some were convinced by what he said but others would not be persuaded others would not be believed Paul's consistency is matched by the consistency of the Jews they give a divided response and Paul warns them about a callous non-response to the gospel he declares that their passing up the opportunity of salvation means that the Gentiles will have the opportunity and that they will come to Christ well here is the triumphant conclusion in verses 30 and 31

[74 : 58] Paul's activity over the next two years is described as proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ we are not told what happens beyond the next two years did Paul get to appeal to Caesar was he released did he get to Spain these are left as open questions the gospel has reached Rome as God said it would and the last two words of the text are bold and unhindered which is an excellent summary of the text of Acts the gospel has proved to be unstoppable it is unhindered in its journey and its messengers have been marked by their courageous boldness it is fitting that such a dynamic narrative should conclude not with a noun or an adjective but with an adverb unhinderedly qualifying the participles proclaiming and teaching Bruce says Luke has reached the objective of his history by bringing Paul to Rome where he enjoys complete liberty to preach the gospel under the eyes of the imperial guard the program mapped out in 1.8 has been carried through and so how powerful is the gospel how does the gospel reach Rome what is God's ongoing purpose for the gospel most of Sydney's old department stores no longer exist they have been swallowed up by shopping malls one of the old stores in Sydney was one built by an Englishman by the name of Anthony Horden and he took a large spreading tree as the image of his department store the tree actually existed on the main highway between Sydney and Melbourne and it was a beautiful tree with a large spreading canopy under the tree was the motto while I live

I grow for Paul life is Christ and death is gain as long as Paul lives he ministers he doesn't stop in the most extreme and exhausting of circumstances he continues to preach persuade teach exhorts while he lives he seeks to promote the growth of the gospel while I live I grow necessary application God superintends the activity of his gospel bearer who perseveres in spite of the most extreme circumstances therefore persevere in ministry and God will bring his purpose to fruition God's will triumphs but not apart from human persistence which he inspires possible application how much does consistent perseverance in ministry mark my life how easily am I tempted to give up don't give

up

I have many people in this city and it is remarkable that students say to me that now when they fly into cities all over the world on their missionary endeavour and look out the window of the jet they remember these words of chapter 18 verse 10 I have many people in this place you stay take courage do not give up and that must drive us wherever we are to be seeking out the elect we have no idea who they are but we must be sharing the gospel with them so that they can come to life well that's it thanks questions questions yes yes yes well in the narrative remember that he says I've ordered it

I have taken account to order and really if you look at 1119 it's as though everything from 8 chapter 1 up to 1119 itself is a bracket so he says these things this is what happened after Stephen was martyred now we go into all sorts of the Samaritan ministry the conversion of Saul Cornelius etc and then he comes back so all the time he is going into necessary side issues but he is very disciplined in bringing it back so chapter 12 is there to show that though the church the gentile church is growing in one area the Jewish church is knowing dark days but it is a reminder that no matter how dark the days look God is in control and he punctuates therefore the or he begins the missionary journey with the reminder that as the apostles set out on the missionary journey the word of God is healthy indeed and it's interesting that he does that in 19 and he does it back in chapter 6 and it's almost as though these reminders of the word of

God's health come just before a major turning point of gospel growth it's very healthy look at what happens here it's very healthy watch this it's very healthy watch this yes yes yes thanks yes yes and how much I should talk about how much I should for example with the names issue should I go into any great detail on that because it's not central to the core of the issue but I do want people to have a love for this book and that it is a great book but whether or not I'll go into that I don't know there's an old bloke just joined our church in Sydney and he's come and I said to him why have you come here he's in his late 70s he said because I'm sick of lectures every Sunday I want to hear preaching and the pastor of our church is a very fine preacher his name is

[81:10] Grant Spurgeon Thorpe right that's a great name for a preacher so he preaches and this man on the second week there gave me a copy he said take this little book if you're training preachers you'll love it and it was a book written by Dale Carnegie how to give a public address and it is a very good book but Dale Carnegie in that book makes the point that the public speaker must always develop reserve power that is you must know much more about your subject than you state so that when people come after the service and ask you a question you know more but you haven't actually said everything you know and I think that we need to just keep working at the text and we'll keep coming up with things in the text here because Luke is the hidden narrator who gives clues we'll keep coming I expect that I'll keep growing in my knowledge of Acts every year that I get involved with it because you get clues but I won't necessarily use all of those because it will only be overwhelming to the congregation but the good thing about this book that we've just done on Acts is that a lot of the issues which may not come in the sermon can come out through the

Bible study because the issue of the names is a good issue to raise and it would be more helpful to do that in the Bible study where there can be discussion of it than from the pulpit yes yeah well I'd back it up with the whole issue of God's elect people in from the epistles that God has a people for himself Romans 10 and he will call them out through the preaching of the gospel so in the view of Romans chapter 10 in the context of Romans 9 to 11 Paul has an elect within Israel and the way God will call out his elect from both Israel and the world is through the gospel faith comes by hearing the message and therefore Paul God saying to Paul there are elect in Corinth and they will hear the message and come to me so you keep at it so I think it is a remarkable verse and what I love about it is that it reminds me that Paul is no great superhero no Arnold Schwarzenegger that I cannot relate to he's a man like me who needs encouragement and who needs to be told to keep going so I would simply do that I'd read

Acts in the light of the epistles I'd read the narrative in the light of the didactic I think that's an important principle of hermeneutics yes oh it could mean that and there were Christians but but it and it could mean that let me just go back to it but there are there are Christians here but he's saying that Paul's in Corinth only just begun his ministry there and so Paul leaves he's been rejected many of the Corinthians believed him and were baptized one night God comes and says I have many people in this city that's as though the ones I've got are there but I've got many many more that's the way I would read it yeah yes David these two questions are I think the same thing

some of these sermons they they they range over a whole load of things like the five city tour for instance I've done series five sermons on those five yeah and the other thing is that you know in four years time when you come to do another series on acts well perhaps not four years but in the future there'll be some of your congregation who've already heard this yeah and some who are new so you've got to think of something new yeah how do you wrestle well you you you you'll you'll preach it differently in four years time than you do now we were told I remember Bill Dumbrell who was our Old Testament lecturer at Moore College telling us that every year he goes through his file and throws out every sermon that's more than two years old and I thought what a dreadful waste because when I went to my first parish I thought I'll start in Ephesians and I'll preach a perfect series on Ephesians and I'll never have to prepare it again I can just keep preaching at every church I'm in but I never preached it again at all because I had not that I changed my convictions but I just changed the way I'd look at the text and you're constantly rehearsing that sort of thing so you'll bring out different emphases there because I say the other one the other thing here is that there is a lot about ministry and encouragement for the gospel worker here and what the gospel minister does and how is that going to relate to the congregation if I'm not a gospel messenger just keep in mind that in Australia most people who drop out of ministry the majority of people who drop out of ministry drop out of because of frustration with their congregation that their congregation were imposing expectations on them that they did not go into ministry to meet and therefore I think it's a very healthy thing if we keep reminding our congregation of what ministry is really about because it's a good to educate them so that they're not pressuring those who are in ministry to do things that they are not primarily called to do we need single-minded leadership but we also need encouragement from single-minded congregations and Acts gives us the ability to do that thanks thanks thanks fantastic■■■■ now you have to enjoyed video inh so yo know