

Church – The Beginnings, Part 54
Acts 1 thru 17 – What have we learned so far?
Acts 1 - 17 | 11/12/2017
NEW LIFE FELLOWSHIP

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What have we NOT Seen (nor will we ever) so far in the book of Acts:

1. **Altar Calls** ... like we see today? We read of **NO** Folks coming down to the front, down to the “altar”, down to the wooden cross (and nail some new nails) ... no one ever is called to come out of their seats and come forward and say a prayer, or to be pressured into some sort of “confession”, etc. Folks are **Called to Repentance** and to Trust in Jesus Christ after hearing the Gospel message. But, as in the close of Acts 17, there is no hint of standing up in front of folks (on stage) and pressuring people with more and more words, and music playing, etc. for folks to come down to the “altar”, etc.
2. **Celebration of any, so-called, Christian Holy Days** (holidays). Acts encompasses about 30 years. During that whole time, **not one** Christian, not one Apostle, elder, or deacon are recorded ever celebrating Christmas or decorating a Christmas tree, giving and receiving Christmas presents; nor do we see anyone celebrate Good Friday or Easter or initiate any Easter Egg Hunts, etc. Today's huge cultural and economic “push” to have folks celebrate these Pagan-rooted, Roman Catholic holidays is absent entirely from the Bible (from cover to cover).
3. **Open-Air Street Preaching** – we don't see this in the book of Acts or in the New Testament, anywhere. That which we see today as Open-Air Street Preaching is not seen. In all the cases that we've looked at so far, including Paul's time in the Athens Marketplace and his speaking engagement at the Areopagus (which was by invitation to a private meeting) – we have no example of this. I am not saying that folks should never do it, it is just that we have no example of it in scripture, even in Acts 2. Peter was in the upper room, either in the window or at a balcony when addressing the crowd after the Noise of the Holy Spirit's arrival in them. Peter did not initiate the “sermon”, he was responding and explaining what just happened (Pentecost, etc.). So, when folks seem to want to pressure us to all be Street Preachers, they don't have a leg to stand on. But, we are all called to spread the Gospel. It isn't just Pastors, Missionaries and Evangelists who are called to spread the Gospel, all of us are.
4. **Professional Clergy (or a profession class of clergymen)** – Jesus warned about this in Revelation 2 → “The Nicolaitans” ... the high society leadership class ruling over the Laity. Although we do see apostles, elders, and deacons – they are all brethren in Christ – spiritual leaders in the Body of Christ, but not Better than others. → 1 Cor. 9:14 / Galatians 6:6-8

Some of the Reality of What we DO see in the Book of Acts:

1. **God, the Holy Spirit, is the one leading the church, actively, in the Name of Jesus Christ.**
Acts 2 → we see Him fulfilling Christ's promises of **Luke 24:44-49** and John chptrs 14 thru 16.
The Promised coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled Ezekiel 36:25-27 – The Messiah's Kingdom, of the New Covenant, would be filled with the Holy Spirit, transforming lives.
According to **John 14 thru 15** – The Holy Spirit would convict sinners of their sin and of Christ's righteousness (that Christ is the rescue from God's Righteous Judgment). The Holy Spirit would lead the apostles and subsequent disciples into all of God's Truth (per God's Written Word). **The Holy Spirit would lead the church, and the spread of the Mission of the Gospel from start to finish. And this is what we've seen so far. (Acts 1:8)**
Acts 2 – The Beginning – Mighty rushing wind → Peter's Gospel Message → 3000 saved.
Act 13 – The Holy Spirit spoke and direct the **Missionary efforts from Antioch**
Acts 16 – The Holy Spirit forbade Paul's team into certain regions, but sent a vision for reaching Europe – the Macedonian Vision.

2. **Every believer is responsible for Spreading the Gospel** – no one had to over emphasize this to them – they all pitched in, prayerfully and spread the Gospel, together. Again, it wasn't just the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastoral-elders, and deacons (those with titles and that were well-known, etc.) – but every Christian. We don't see the leaders seeking to “beat” this message into those that they were serving. Christians just did it, without being asked over and over again. **This is one of those undeniable, identifiable Marks of a true believer in Christ.** They don't try to find excuses so that they can avoid sharing the Gospel or wait for some “opportunity” to “happen” somehow. **They make it happen and go out and spread it.**

Here are two cases:

- a. **Acts 4:23-31** – After Peter and John were released from being falsely accused and threatened, the whole church prayed, together and then evangelized together.
- “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all **boldness** they may **speak Your word**, ³⁰ by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”
- ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they SPOKE the word of God with boldness.**
- b. **Acts 11:19-21** – (unnamed Messiah Jewish followers of Yeshua evangelized all the way up the coast from Israel to Syria – folks from the Island of Cyprus and from the North African Region of Cyrene (Libya, Algeria, Tunisia – today))
- ¹⁹ Now those who had been scattered as a result of the persecution that started because of Stephen made their way as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, **speaking the word** to no one except Jews. ²⁰ **But** there were some of them, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began **speaking** to the Greeks also, **proclaiming** the good news about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed **turned to the Lord.**

What we learn from this is → all Christians, no matter our “status” within the church, are called to and responsible for the Spreading of the Gospel, personally (not by proxy through others). These examples, recorded, emphasize, every born-again, disciple of Jesus Christ felt it was their joy, passion, obligation, and responsibility to share the Gospel with the Lost, no matter the cost. Again, we are not saying all Christians have to be “Open-Air Street Preachers”. We have example after example of how Christians shared the Gospel with Jews and Gentiles, so far, up to this point (to the end of Acts 17).

3. **The Spread of the Gospel – The Great Commission is the Overarching Emphasis of the Book of Acts:** We see in all 4 Gospels there is some sort of mention or articulation of the Great Commission → Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Luke 24:44-49; John 20:21-32 (“As the Father has sent me, I also send you” → i.e. the Great Commission). Within all 4 Gospels, we see that Jesus sought to prepare His disciples for what we see happen in the Book of Acts.

We see the apostles follow and obey what Christ said – example - Matthew 10:

- a. Finding a **household of peace** and use that as the “Gospel-base of operations” for reaching that town for Christ. We see, Paul and his team do this many times. Matt. 10:11-15
- b. **When persecution** comes because of the Gospel, flee to the next town. Again, Paul's team (or Paul himself) seems to use this tactic, as well. (Matt. 10:23)
- c. **If they are captured for the Spreading of the Gospel** – they relied upon the Holy Spirit to speak through them. Matt 10:19-20

4. **Prayer** – it starts in Acts chapter one – 10-day prayer meeting – and we see it throughout the book. From Acts 2, onward, the emphasis is always on the **Spread of the Gospel, in particular** → **Acts 4, 6, 7 & 13** ... some might ask how Acts 6 related to this? Praying for Deacons? If we read – right after the deacons were chosen – the result was → **Acts 6:7** - So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

So, prayers, even though they might have been for something internal within the Body of Christ – the emphasis was always upon Outreach – the Gospel Mission.

Stephen cared more about the salvation of those killing him, than of his own life:

→ They were stoning Stephen as he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

Then he knelt down and **cried out with a loud voice**, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin!” And saying this, he fell asleep.” **Acts 7:59-60**

Why the loud voice? Because God was up in Heaven and he needed to yell to get God’s attention? Nope – he loudly prayed so that those killing him would hear his prayer on their behalf.

Other Prayers: Acts 9:40; 11:18 (Prayer of Praise); 12:5 (prayer for Peter);

We can learn from the Gospels regarding what Jesus commanded us to Pray, and the actual prayers recorded (or sessions of prayer recorded, as in Acts 13). What is the emphasis, overall, with all of those prayers?

The overarching emphasis of all of those Prayers → the **Spread of the Gospel** and the **Spiritual/Doctrinal Health** of the Body of Christ. We don’t really see any other examples of any other kinds of prayers in the New Testament.

We do not see prayers for prospering individuals in business, or to be financially wealthy.

(e.g.: Name-it & Claim-it Prosperity Gospel – false gospel)

We do not see prayers that relate to individual’s or of a family’s “comfort”, to be “happy”, or to be “safe”, etc. – we don’t see anyone praying or saying → “God just wants you to be happy”.

What we’ve just learned, let’s apply what we’ve learned and follow the Bible, God’s Word, in the Power of the Holy Spirit, in the Name of Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father, AMEN.

Acts 2:42 → They steadfastly, continually devoted themselves to the Apostles Teachings, to the Fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to the Prayers.

Where are the **Apostles’ Teachings found**, in the Bible → the books of: Romans through Jude.

We need to spend much time in them, learning the apostles’ teachings.