



A Few Faithful Men

Sermon Series
Introduction to ACTS
January 28, 2018



Purpose: Introduce the book of Acts to the congregation in preparation of our study.

Introduction: Welcome to HBF this morning! If you have your bibles please be turning to the book of Acts. If you don't have a bible, please grab one from the seat rack in front of you and please be turning to page 836.

Today we start our study of the book of Acts! I'm excited about this study in the book of Acts for few reasons.

- 1) It is a **transitional** book.
- 2) It is a **history** book.
- 3) It is a book of **action**.

Acts is a **Transition Book**

First, it is a key transition book. Our church is in a transition back to one service. The number of guests and new members and attendees is growing and it is a time of change in our church. When God is moving, we have to move with him and meet people where they are. We see this in the book of Acts. The church starts with a bang in the book of Acts, but the ongoing work of the church is firmly placed in the hands of faithful men who are able to teach others also at the book's end. That is the essence of God's charge to us in **Matthew 28:19-20**, and Paul's admonition to Timothy in **2 Timothy 2:2**.

In the past year, we have seen tremendous response of faithful men and women. From the praise team, the elementary wing, the student Ministry to the service ministries like the sound booth, Common Grounds and Connections Ministry, faithful saints have responded to the call to serve God. Part of that service to the Lord is not only a personal response to the ministry need before them, but a maturation of the team members who serve alongside them. This is what we see occurs all through Acts. **People are not called to be busy but to be effective in preaching the gospel and making disciples in ministry.**

We have a unique opportunity at HBF right now we cannot afford to miss. The leaders of the church for the next few decades are rising up by God's grace, and it is imperative that we pour everything we have into their development so they like Timothy and Titus, Aquila and Pricilla; forge ahead to the coming of Christ in obedience to the great commission. The leaders rising up at HBF today will be reaching my grandchildren and great-grandchildren's generation should the Lord tarry his coming.

Acts is A **History Book**

Secondly, Acts is a history book. We see a genuine movement of God in the first century. We sometimes have a romantic view of the early church. We should certainly not minimize her impact or her example, but the Lord makes sure in the book of Acts to include all her warts and wrinkles. This is so we understand that **even the best and most impactful church or churches are not flawless in function**

or family relationships. One of the most amazing thing about the church is God's ability to sustain her through time. Any given Sunday it is amazing that God gathers a couple hundred people together at HBF to equip the saints of God in the word of God to accomplish the mission of God in the power of God for the glory of God.

The church's existence from the first day until now is a miracle of God many take for granted. We don't exist at this time in history just because we are organized, pass an offering plate and have motivational speeches. Tony Robbins and Eric Thomas can do that. The local New Testament church is God's ordained institution to accomplish God's mission in God's Power for God's glory. She is endowed with power of the Holy Ghost through her members and her structure and she is supernaturally reproductive as the seed of God's word has free course in her members.

The book of Acts reveals that the influence the church had among overwhelming odds in the Roman Empire, is the same influence we should have in these last days. The same global governance prophesied to Daniel continues to give us a "Romans Road" for gospel outreach, strategic discipleship and church planting until Jesus comes.

Acts Should Call us To Action

Lastly, the title of the book is the **Acts of the apostles**. At the end of the day, the apostles acted on what God entrusted to them. They were not only hearers of God's word but doers. We often look at these dear saints like superheroes from Marvel comics and forget that they were just faithful men.

God used them in amazing ways to get supernatural results. But as my father used to tell me, they put their pants on one leg at a time just like you do. I do not want to minimize the amazing work and example of the apostles, quite the opposite, I want to respond to their example with like faith. It is my prayer that as we study the book of Acts that we would grow deeper in our faith, so we hand off to generations to follow an example that will provoke obedience and faith in God, his word and his church.

When I consider how the book of Acts closes, it appears as if Paul dropped the ball and the church was in peril, yet here we are on January 28, 2018 endeavoring to pass to the next generations of disciples the precious cargo of God's word that has been delivered to us.

Let's face it, the success of the first century church or our church will not be found in numbers, activity or personality. Success of the church is found in the Word of God. Carrying out what God has called us to do is where we find success. (Joshua 1:8)

Acts 17:6 *And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have **turned the world upside down are come hither also;***

I'm looking forward to studying the book of Acts, as it is amazing to consider what God can do through a **few faithful men**. May God use us to "turn the world

upside down” (Acts 17:6) for his honor and glory as we consider the **transitional, historical and personal significance** of what God reveals to us in his word.

Read **Acts 1:1-8** (Pray)

Let’s learn about Acts! We will begin with the ABC’s of Acts!

I. **About Acts**

A. About the author of Acts. **Acts 1:1-3**

1. God is the author of the book of Acts because it’s His story. Nonetheless the human instrument that God used to pen this epistle was none other than Luke, the beloved physician (Colossians 4:14), the travel companion of Paul. We find Luke include himself in the story as he says “we” in **Acts 16:10**.
 - a. It is my prayer that you find yourself in the story of God’s history of the church and join in on the glorious promises of the New Testament.
2. Luke is the human instrument and author of Acts. “The former treatise” written to **Theophilus** was the epistle of Luke. **Acts 1:1-14** dovetail with **Luke 24:49-53**.
 - a. Theophilus is easy to deconstruct. Theo is like Theology, the study of God. Philus is similar to philo or love like the English word Philadelphia. We don’t know who Theophilus was but his name means “Lover of God” or God lover. Most believe Theophilus was a person whom the epistle was written. Others surmise Theophilus was a name used for all who are saved and love God. God has settled the matter so there is no need to debate it.
3. The epistle of Luke speaks to what Christ did on earth through his **physical body**. The epistle of Acts speaks to the work of Christ through his **spiritual body** the church.
4. Luke accounts for what Jesus **did and what he taught**. **Acts 1:1** The Pharisees taught but they didn’t “do” what they taught.

Matthew 23:2-3** Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat: 3 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: **for they say, and do not.
5. Luke had a good relationship with Paul.

B. About the information in Acts. **Acts 1:1**

1. Luke spans from the birth of Christ (and if you count the genealogy, from the first Adam to the last Adam) to the ascension. Acts covers a time in history from the ascension to **63-65 AD**.
2. This epistle covers events up to about 5-7 years before destruction of Jerusalem and the temple under General Titus in 70 AD.
3. It is filled with firsts!

- a. The first gospel sermon (Acts 2:14-40)
- b. The first church discipline with Ananias & Saphira and (Acts 5:1-11)
- c. The first Deacons (Acts 6:1-5)
- d. The first Gentile convert is Cornelius' home (Acts 10:44-48)
- e. The first believers called Christians (Acts 11:26)
- f. The first martyrs Stephen (Acts 7:60) & James (Acts 12:2)
- g. The first missionaries (Acts 13:1-13)

C. About the Apostles Acts. **Acts 1:2, 13**

1. **About the authority of the apostles.** The apostles were chosen by Jesus **Acts 1:2**

Acts 1:2 *Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto **the apostles whom he had chosen**:*

- a. The apostles had a unique ministry with Jesus. he was with them for 40 days speaking to them of things pertaining to the **Kingdom of God**.
- b. The Kingdom of Heaven is not mentioned outside the book of Matthew.
- c. The Kingdom of God is exclusively mentioned in relation to the church.

Luke 17:20-21 *And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: 21 Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, **the kingdom of God is within you.***

- d. Jesus told his apostles they would Go in **Matthew 28:19-20** but now he says **NO** in **Acts 1:4**. He says stay put and wait for the Spirit so they have power to accomplish the work of the Kingdom of God.

2. The Apostles are listed by name for us in **Acts 1:13**

Acts 1:13 *And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both (1)**Peter**, and (2)**James**, and (3)**John**, and (4)**Andrew**, (5)**Philip**, and (6)**Thomas**, (7)**Bartholomew**, and (8)**Matthew**, (9)**James the son of Alphaeus**, and (10)**Simon Zelotes**, and (11)**Judas the brother of James**.*

- a. Judas is missing because he committed suicide and went to his own place.
- b. Interesting that **Jesus was rejected** of the Jew thought he was **Messiah** and **Judas was accepted** among the disciples though he was he **son of perdition**.
- c. All these apostles had been with Jesus since the baptism of John and were present at his ascension in **Acts 1:9**

D. There is something **about Mary**.

1. Last mention of Mary the mother of Jesus in **Acts 1:14**.

Acts 1:14 *These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and **Mary the mother of Jesus**, and with his brethren.*

2. No one is ever mentioned praying to Mary.
3. No one is even mentioned talking to Mary.
4. No one calls Mary “blessed among women” (Luke 1:28)
5. No one considered Mary to be “immaculately” conceived and sinless.
6. No one is recorded honoring Mary above that of their own mother.
7. Notice that Jesus brethren are present. Mary was a virgin at Jesus birth but she and Joseph went on to have children. Mark 6:3 mentions Jesus had four brothers (James, Joses, Juda and Simon) and sisters.

About Acts

II. Contrast in Acts

A. Acts reveals several Contrasts

1. The contrast of **cowardly** disciples and **courageous** apostles.
 - a. Before Acts 2 and forty days with Jesus the apostles assembled in fear of the Jews. (John 20:19)
 - b. After forty days with Jesus and Pentecost in Acts 2 the apostles preached with fearless boldness and power.
2. The contrast of Acts 1-12 & 13-28 The Holy City vs. the whole world.
 - a. Acts 1-12 dealt with the Jerusalem “The Holy City”
 - b. Acts 13-28 deals with the “Whole world”
3. The contrast of **Antioch** and **Alexandria**.
 - a. Acts 11:26 “The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch”. From Antioch came the first gentile church, the first missions movement, the first diverse pastoral team.
 - b. Acts 18:24 “Apollos” came from Alexandria. Alexandria produced a mighty eloquent man who knew the scripture, he simply didn’t know Jesus until he met Aquilla and Pricilla. It is no accident Alexandria is associated with Italy (Acts 27:6) for it is in Italy that the corrupt Sinaiticus and Vaticanus will eventually try and usurp the preserved word of God.
4. In Acts we see the contrast of Peter and Paul. (*Mary isn’t included until the hippie movement of the 60’s*)
 - a. Peter is prominent in Acts 1-12
 - b. Paul is prominent in Acts 13-28

Galatians 2:7-9 *But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter; 8 (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty*

in me toward the Gentiles:) 9 *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*

- c. We see Acts start off with Peter and the 11 Apostles in an upper room praying. Acts 1:13; Acts ends with Paul under house arrest soon to be alone in a jail cell after sailing to Jerusalem.
5. Acts reveals the contrast between Jews and Gentiles.
 - a. **Unbelieving Jews were looking for signs**. I.e. Pentecost (**Acts 2**) fulfilling **Joel 2; Acts 10:46** confirming **gentiles** had received the Holy Ghost.
 - b. **Unbelieving Gentiles were looking for wisdom**. I.e. Paul preaching on Mars hill in Acts 17.

1 Corinthians 1:22 *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:*
6. The response to the gospel.
 - a. **Revival** resulted in **Acts 19:18-20**
 - b. **Riots** broke out in **Acts 19:28-34**
- B. Conflict is revealed in the contrast.
 1. Satan withstands the gospel.
 - a. **Acts 4:18** Satan **ban preaching** through the Sanhedrin.
 - b. **Acts 8:18** Satan attempts to **buy off** the preachers.
 - c. **Acts 16:16-18** Satan attempts to **blur the preaching** of the gospel.
 2. Demonic Activity to distract
 - a. Satan used Sorcerers in **Acts 8:9; 13:6-10**
 - b. Satan used a damsel possessed with a devil **Acts 16:16-18**
- C. Conversions result among key people groups because the gospel is not bound. The three sons and people groups of Noah are represented in Acts. (Shem, Ham and Japeth)
 1. (**Ham** **Genesis 10:6-20**) The Ethiopian Eunuch is saved in **Acts 8:36-38**
 2. (**Shem** **Genesis 10:21-31**) Paul is saved in **Acts 9:1-6** on road to Damascus Syria.
 3. (**Japeth** **Genesis 10:25**) Cornelius is saved in **Acts 10:44-48** by faith in the gospel preached by Peter.
- D. Conversions grow innumerably through the ministry of discipleship.
 1. **Acts 1:15** = 120
 2. **Acts 2:41** = 3120
 3. **Acts 4:4** = 8120
 4. **Acts 5:14** = innumerable amount of conversions.

About Acts

Contrast in Acts

III. Transitional Nature of Acts

- A. Transition from Israel's Rejection To the Churches Inception
1. First rejection: Acts 7 The Jews reject Jesus in Jerusalem at the preaching of Stephen. Stephen prayed the Lord would not lay this sin to their charge. The Jews had three chances to receive the Lord nationally in Jerusalem:
 - a. No 1: **Acts 2:37**
 - b. No 2: **Acts 4:8**
 - c. No 3: **Acts 7** at the preaching of Stephen
 2. Second rejection: Acts 13:46-47 the Jews in Asia Minor reject the gospel preached by Paul.

***Acts 13:45-47** But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. 46 Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.*
 3. Third Rejection: Acts 18:6 the Jews in European mainland (uttermost) reject the preaching of Paul.

***Acts 18:6** And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.*
 4. By the time Paul addresses the Jews in Acts 28:17-24 the church age is in full effect approximately 5-7 years out from the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD under General Titus, the nephew of Nero and future Emperor of Rome.
- B. Transition from the Old Testament Cannon to the New Testament Cannon
1. Acts is one of three transitional books in the New Testament. A lot of misunderstanding and false doctrine come from misunderstanding the transitional nature of these books.
 2. The transitional books of the New Testament are:
 - a. Matthew: Transitioning from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
 - b. Acts: transitioning from Israel to the Church.
 - c. Hebrews: transitioning from the church to the tribulation.
 3. It is important to remember that all scripture is written for you but not all scripture is written to you. All scripture is profitable for doctrine, correction and instruction in righteousness but it is mandatory that we understand how to rightly divide the word of God.

- C. Transition from the dispensation of the law to the dispensation of grace
1. Acts clearly transitions from the Jews looking for fulfillment of the law in the Messiah to the Gentiles receiving Jesus as the atonement and fulfillment of the law by grace through faith. Though many Jews were saved at length the leadership of Israel rejected their Messiah because they never repented and received him as their sacrifice for sin.
 2. Conversely, the gentiles who had no right to the promises of the law are grafted in because they believed by faith Jesus was Savior not only of the Jews but of the world fulfilling the law and therefore gain entrance into the Kingdom of God through faith in the finished work of Christ alone as their sacrifice for sin.
 3. **By the end of acts the dispensation of grace is fixed** and the destruction of the temple places the Kingdom of heaven promises on hold until after the catching away of the church.

About Acts

Contrast in Acts

Transitional Nature of Acts

IV. Spirit of God in Acts

There is a lot of confusion about the Spirit of God today because of misunderstandings or ignorance of what God is doing in this time of transition.

- A. The Holy Ghost promised by John

Matthew 3:11 *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the **Holy Ghost**, and with fire:*

1. The baptism of the Holy Ghost occurred at Pentecost and continues as people place their faith in Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. **The baptism of fire is not the cloven tongues** "like as of fire" (Acts 2:3). The baptism of fire is referring to the coming tribulation and then renovation of the universe in **2 Peter 3:10-11, Revelation 21:1.**

Acts 1:20 *For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.*

3. After Jesus ascension the Holy Ghost taught them all things whatsoever he said to them so the Old Testament scripture was now clear. They no longer just saw Jesus as the Messiah (Isaiah 9:6) they now saw him as their Savior!

Acts 8:32-35 *The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth: 33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for*

his life is taken from the earth. 34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.

B. The Holy Ghost promised by Jesus at his ascension **Acts 1:8**

Acts 1:8 *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.*

C. The Holy Ghost provided to the Jews in Jerusalem on Pentecost. **Acts 2:16-17**

1. Now the Old Testament scripture is opened up to the apostles and they preach with power! Peter quotes from Joel 2:28-32 as he describes what just occurred at the baptism and birth of the church.
2. In Acts 1:20 at the teaching of Jesus the disciples were seeing the Old Testament as personal and applicable to their situation.

D. The Holy Ghost poured out upon the Gentiles **Acts 10:44-48**

1. Many site this passage as evidence of tongues in the gentile church but you will not see tongues appear other than in Acts 19:6 as confirmation to believing Jews who place their faith in Christ as Savior.
2. Since **Genesis 1:2** the Spirit of God has been moving and today he is moving in us! You are unique in that you have the indwelling Holy Ghost. When you were saved you were baptized with the Holy Ghost and God has brought you into Christ and **His Story!**

We have talked:

About Acts

Contrast in Acts

Transitional Nature of Acts

Spirit of God in Acts

Conclusion: This morning God is calling us to **Action from Acts**. **Would we be like the few faithful men who allowed God's Spirit to teach them and use them to reach their generation, our first generation in the church?** If the catching away of the church were today, would we finish as they started? If not why not? We have the same promise, same mandate and same Spirit. We even have the written word of God! My prayer as we go through this study is that we would run our race and finish our course. That we would be a few faithful men and women who bring in the Kingdom of God in obedience to the Lord's command despite the Laodicean church age we live.

Alter Call

Welcome Guests:

Pray over offering

Announcements: