

12-11-22

“Acts 2023”
Acts 20:22-24 & Selected Scripture

Prel Rmks

This morning ... LOGW – Acts 20:22-24

What do we take from our 2+ years in the book of Acts?

I believe we can distill from our study certain characteristics in the lives of the believers in Acts that made the church so powerful, effective and useful, and fruitful in their day.

I believe these 3 verses capture the spirit of the early church and they provide a summary of the main flow of the book as God worked so powerfully through His people.

(20) And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, **(23)** except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. **(24)** But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

INTRODUCTION

1:8 Outline ~ command ~ prophetic

Themes

- Sovereignty of God – redemptive history unfolding according to God’s plan
- Supernatural element at work – God supernaturally intervening in the lives of His church
- Scriptural soundness – followed the Apostolic teaching
- Witnessing
- Praying
- Explosive multiplication and growth
- Importance of the local church

We could focus any of these themes

But here’s what I want us to focus on this morning as we look back over our study of the book of Acts. I want us to answer this question:

What did we see in the lives of God’s people throughout the book that we need to be true in our lives here in the 21st C.

Title

4 characteristics of all of God’s people throughout the book that we see here in Paul’s life in the 3 verses we’ve read.

I. They Were Spirit-filled 22-23

Pentecost – indwelling of the HS. The HS took up residence in the lives of the Lord’s church – His people

They were filled with the Spirit

- controlled by ~ guided by ~ directed by
- Ephesians 5:18 = “under the influence”

Paul:

(22) And see, now I go bound ???
in the spirit to Jerusalem, Paul’s spirit – not the HS

not knowing the things that will
happen to me there,

(23) except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me. Paul’s spirit was bound by the HS. His spirit was so in tune with God’s Spirit that his own spirit was completely controlled by God!

This is the story of the book of Acts

- “The Acts of the HS”
- The book of Acts is what the HS did through the Apostles and God’s people

This explains everything in the book of Acts:

- Why the church grew so fast with such explosive multiplication
- Why the churches were what they were:
 - Jerusalem – faithful
 - Antioch – missions-minded
 - Philippi – giving
 - Berea – noble and Scriptural
 - **They were Spirit-filled churches**
- Why the people in those churches were such:
 - faithful people
 - praying people
 - witnessing people

It explains every success the early church had – it was God at work through them:

- It was not them
 - They don't deserve the glory
 - God alone, deserves the glory
- Zechariah 4:6** So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by [human] power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.

So, practically speaking, how do we live Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled, Spirit-guided and directed lives?

- We can't fill ourselves with the HS
- You can't fill yourself
- I can't fill myself

And yet, we are commanded:

Ephesians 5:18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit,

And the Bible says:

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

So, how do we live a Spirit-filled life? Very practical here:

1. There must be an emptying of self ... we are going to talk specifically about this in the third point of the message ...
2. There must be continual confession and repentance of sin

Most of us know the verse

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Proverbs 28:13 He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.

Push forward, move forward,
be effective ...
If we want to be effective ...

3. There must be the saturation of our minds and hearts with the Word of God

Ephesians 5:18-19 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but **be filled with the Spirit, (19)** speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Colossians 3:16 **Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

There is no Spirit-filled life apart from our lives being filled to the full of the Word of God

- That's why we need to read our Bibles, study our Bibles, and meditate on our Bibles daily, and hide God's Word in our hearts
- That's why we need to be in Sunday School to hear the Word taught
- That's why we need to be in worship to hear the Word preached
- All of this so our lives will be literally saturated with the Word of God

There must be an **emptying** of self

There must be continual **confession** and **repentance** of sin

There must be the **saturation** of our minds and hearts with the Word of God

4. There must be a daily yielding of our lives to the Lord

Here I am Lord, reporting for
duty: mind, hands, feet, eyes,
hear, tongue

Romans 12:1 I beseech you
therefore, brethren, by the
mercies of God, that you
present your bodies a living
sacrifice, holy, acceptable to
God, *which is* your reasonable
service.

So first of all – the believers we saw in Acts were

Spirit-filled

**And being Spirit-filled led to the other characteristics we
saw in their lives:**

II. They Were Steadfast 24

They were not moved away from the fundamental priorities of living a life faithful to Christ ...

- There are certain fundamentals of faithfulness that must have a priority in our lives if we are going to be disciples of Christ, if we are going to be His followers.
- A common characteristic of most of the believers we saw in Acts is that they had these fundamentals down pat. They had these priorities as part of their lives, and they wouldn't let anything move them away from those fundamental priorities.
- They were steadfast!
- Not even persecution – great persecution could move them.
- Look at how that is stated about Paul here:

(23) **except that** the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

(24) **But none of these things move me;**

Paul knew that persecution and imprisonment would be the result of going to Jerusalem, but it didn't matter ...

We see this resolve and steadfastness throughout the book of Acts:

When they were scattered because of persecution, look how they responded:

Acts 8:1 Now Saul was consenting to his death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

What did they do:

Acts 8:4 Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.

Acts 11:19 Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only.

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 brothers.

Acts 2:42 And they **continued** steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Acts 2:46 So **continuing** daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart,

Acts 11:23-24 When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should **continue** with the Lord. **(24)** For he was a good man, full of the

“continued”

To attend constantly to s.t.

To be devoted to s.t.

To be earnest about s.t.

Barnabas

Slightly different Gk word but with the same general meaning

Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Paul & Barnabas in Antioch of Pisidia

Acts 13:43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

Paul was stoned and left for dead in Lystra, then look what happened

Acts 14:20-22 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. **(21)** And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, **(22)** strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to **continue** in the faith, and *saying*, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

Continuing steadfastly is a key element of faithfulness

It was a defining feature of the early church – those early churches we saw in Acts. They just kept on in spite of e.t...

They would not be moved away from the fundamental priorities involved in following Jesus.

That needs to be a defining feature of who we are, too
They Were Steadfast

III. They Were Self-Denying 24

Paul:

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me;

That right there is, I'm afraid, what often separates that early church from the church today.

nor do I count my life dear to myself,

Too often we do count our lives dear

Self-denial was certainly a defining feature in the lives of the Apostles and others that we saw in Acts:

We saw this self-denial in Peter and John when they went before the Sanhedrin- Acts 4&5

(8) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: **(9)** If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, **(10)** let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.

In chapter 3, we saw that when they were in the temple area, they healed a man who had been lame from birth

That miracle drew a large crowd and Peter took advantage of the gathering to preach about Jesus

(11) This is the 'STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED BY YOU BUILDERS, WHICH HAS BECOME THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE.' **(12)** Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

They were arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin... And they asked them by what power or what name they had healed the man. 4:7

So what did the Sanhedrin decide do? How did they respond to Peter and John's boldness?

(18) So they **called them and** commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. **(19)** But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. **(20)** For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

That's exactly what they did and they got arrested again.

Acts 5:27-33 And when they had brought them, they set *them* before the council. And the high priest asked them, **(28)** saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!"

Peter spoke in their defense and preached a very good gospel message to the Sanhedrin.

(29) But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. **(30)** The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. **(31)** Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. **(32)** And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so also is the Holy*

Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

This really angered the Sanhedrin!

(33) When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

In vv. 40ff we see the extent of their self-denial and their willingness even to die for the sake of the truth and the Gospel

Acts 5:40-42 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **(41)** So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. **(42)** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

What boldness!

What steadfastness!

There were others who did not count their lives dear to themselves:

All the apostles were martyred except for John ...

Phillip and Stephen and others

Luke 9:23 Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me

Paul wrote when he was chained to a Roman guard when he was under house arrest

Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

Revelation 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and **they did not love their lives to the death.**

The believers we saw in the book of Acts

Were Spirit-filled

Were Steadfast

Were Self-denying

IV. They Were Serving 4ob

Sermon

Acts 20:24 But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself,

so that I may finish my race with joy, Don't you want that?

and the **ministry** which I received from the Lord Jesus, service

to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

Paul was always:

looking forward ~ moving out ~ planning ~ going

Jesus:

Luke 19:13 "Occupy till I come"

Some people think that means fold your arms and sit back and wait to see what happens

But that word doesn't mean we sit and wait
It means we serve and witness!

Conclusion

Chapter 11 – hall of faith

In the book of Acts, we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses

How are we going to run this endurance race that is set before us?

Hebrews 12:1-2 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

(2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

If we are going to run the race in our day the way our brothers and sisters in the early church did. Then we will need to be:

Spirit-filled – controlled, guided and directed by the Spirit of God

Steadfast – not moved by opposition/persecution ...

Self-denying – not counting our lives dear to ourselves

Serving – fulfilling our ministry with joy as we testify to the Gospel of the grace of God.