

The Acts of the Apostles

The Journey – 2020
Jim Hoffman

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Prayer Requests

- Connie Miller’s sister, Cathy (nurse).
- Jocelyn Essick (nurse)
- Lynne George (wisdom for Keith’s care)
- President Trump and Team (wisdom)
- All leaders across America (wisdom)
- America – we need His mercy!

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Prayer Requests

If you have questions during class please text them to 717-645-2134 and Jackie will relay them to me.

If you know how to use the ZOOM chat feature you may use that to send a question to me.

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The Acts of the Apostles

• Acts 6:1 **But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent.** The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word." 5 Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). 6 These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. 7 So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. NLT

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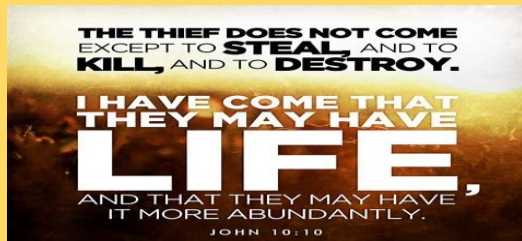
The Acts of the Apostles

- "But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent."
- The church is but weeks old, it is doing well numerically, BUT seemingly out of nowhere we read about "rumblings of discontent".
- Verse #1 could just as easily have been read as "But as the believers rapidly multiplied, **the enemy of our souls was found to be at work.**"

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The Acts of the Apostles



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- 1st Peter 5:8 **Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil.** He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. NLT
- We face a powerful and often unseen enemy in Satan and his minions – they should not be feared, but should be respected.
- Satan had just officially lost the war when Jesus was offered up for our sins on the cross – our redemption was forever sure!

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The Acts of the Apostles

- However, while the war is over, there are lots of battles that still hang in the balance.
- These battles for the believer against the devil and his demons will not change the outcome of the war, but they are still a threat to the believer's walk.
- We should never underestimate the power of our enemy, AND we should never doubt the superiority of the One who is in us!

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Our enemy has tried and true techniques and strategies –
 - **Satan is a liar** – John 8:44 “for he is a liar and the father of lies.”
 - **Satan is able to disguise himself** – 2nd Cor 11:13 These people are false apostles. **They are deceitful workers who disguise themselves as apostles of Christ.** 14 “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light”
 - **Satan is able to do signs and wonders** – 2 Thes 2:9 “This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles.”

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- Our enemy has tried and true techniques and strategies –
- **Satan is able to cause sickness** – Luke 13:16 “This dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years.”
- **Satan accuses Christians before God** – Rev 12:10 “For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth— the one who accuses them before our God day and night.” (attempts to diminish Christ’s work in us)

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- Our enemy has tried and true techniques and strategies –
- **Satan is able to tempt us** – 2nd Cor 11:3 “But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent.”
- **Satan is able to hinder evangelism** – Mark 4:15 “The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message, only to have Satan come at once and take it away.”

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“We have an enemy that operates in the shadows and because he is unseen he is not credited with anywhere near as much havoc as he causes.”

Unknown

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- Regarding the complaint of the Greek Christians – the Apostles’ position was, “we are trying to build a church here, let’s not get bogged down in food distribution”.
- Please understand – it’s not that the distribution of food was unimportant, it just wasn’t what the Apostles were equipped to do.
- 1st Cor 12:7 “A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.”

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- God gifts every Christian with at least one spiritual gift – it is our duty to discover our gift(s) and put them to work for the Kingdom.
- Eph 4:11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the **apostles**, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. NLT
- The Apostles, without Ephesians and 1st Corinthians, evidently knew their role and were not going to be distracted from it.

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It's kind of like one of the 'Dirty Harry' movies with Clint Eastwood. At the end of the film Clint says, 'A man's gotta know his limitations.'

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- One of the more satisfying things for me as the teacher of this class is knowing that so many of you are far more than hearers of the Word.
- As I've said in the past – I am always amazed at the number of ministries that are represented in this class.
- I am almost at the point where instead of assuming you are not involved in a ministry that I am tempted to assume that you are.

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- By the way, I don't want to cast this subject in such a way that you feel guilty if you are not involved in one of the ministries of CLA.
- To be sure, there are many, many ways to serve the Lord that are outside of the walls of CLA – indeed, we probably need more external ministers than we have.
- You will not be satisfied in your walk with Christ until you serve him in some capacity – so again, find your gift and use it. 😊

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- The Bible does not detail for us how to find our spiritual gift(s), but I have some ideas on that subject.
- God has gifted you with both natural and spiritual gifts – just like those with natural musical talents love music, so too you will love your spiritual gift.
- If you want to discover your spiritual gift go do the things you like to do and you've probably found your gift.

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It has been my observation that no one with the gift of leadership has ever said, "I hate to lead" – no one with the gift of helps has ever said, "I hate to help" – and no one with the gift of giving has ever said, "I hate to give".

What God has gifted us to do we will love to do.

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And if you've reached that stage of life where you are moving a little less easy, and no longer have the energy you once did – there is a wonderful way to serve the King. PRAY!



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- Please see your role in the body, whatever it may be, as one that is equal to all other roles in the body.
- 1st Cor 12:22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. 23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. NLT

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- Acts 6:2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility." NLT
- Please see in this text the need for spiritual people in all of the roles in the Body of Christ.
- The qualifications needed were – "well respected, full of the Spirit, and full of wisdom". (just to hand out food!)

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- "The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food."
- There always seems to be a good reason for our grumbling and discontent – in this case it was the suspected unfair distribution of food to the Greek widows.
- We are never told whether the accusation was legitimate or not.

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- When there are grumbings in the body the grumblers need to be heard so that leadership can know if there is, or is not, validity to the grumbler's concerns.
- If their concerns are valid, they should be addressed and if they are found to be invalid the grumblers should stop grumbling!
- In many cases the grumbings in churches are mostly over personal preferences and style – one rare example is music. ☺

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- The enemy's work in our midst looks like -

- Gossip
- Jealousy
- Clicks
- Power Grabs
- Disunity
- Scandals
- Weak Doctrine
- Sin that is Ignored

ETC...

et cetera

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The Acts of the Apostles

- Acts 6:8 Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. 9 But one day some men from the **Synagogue of Freed Slaves**, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. 11 So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." 12 This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. 13 The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. 14 We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us." 15 At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's. NLT

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- The Synagogue of Freed Slaves – that was the name of the synagogue founded by Greek speaking Jews. (this would be similar to our denominations, but this was a denomination of Judaism)
- They spoke Greek because the roots of some were in the Jewish people who had been enslaved by Rome in Northern Africa.
- What is the difference between a temple and a synagogue? It appears as though today there is no meaningful difference as both are places of worship for the Jew.

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- The Synagogue of Freed Slaves were no different than the rest of Jewish leadership who made their living being “religious”.
- Stephen was filled with the Spirit and was performing “miracles and signs among the people” – this no doubt was producing converts from Judaism to Christianity.
- So the “Synagogue of Freed Slaves” was threatened by the gospel that was now **being preached by what we would call a layman.**

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- Layman? Were there really layman in the bible? By our 21st century definition nearly everyone God used to do his work were laymen.

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13

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- They persuaded men to lie about Stephen saying that he was speaking against Moses, the temple, and the law.
- We see this in our politics today – when one side can’t win the argument, they do ad hominem attacks and lie about the opposition’s policies!
- And then we read this – “At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel’s.”

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- This is one of those places in the bible where you just know God is about do something through one of his people.
- **Luke 12:11 So you can anticipate that you will be put on trial before the synagogues and religious officials. Don't worry how you'll respond, and don't worry what you should say. 12 The Holy Spirit will give you the words to say at the moment when you need them. NLT**
- And judging from how the face of Stephen appeared it seems the Holy Spirit has just filled his mouth and mind with what to say. 31

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- What Stephen said is recorded for us in chapter 7 – all 1,300 plus words as he recounts the truth of God's redemption plan starting with Abraham and coming all the way through history to Jesus.
- Like a good witness in a court proceeding he tells the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!
- Unlike the Apostles, Stephen will not be spared from the death penalty, but his final words proved to be his most notable. 32

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Questions

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