

Acts 14_pt1

by Bill Gallatin

The gospel's move to the Gentiles marks a significant shift in the spread of Christianity, and Satan responds with tremendous resistance, but Jesus promises supernatural strength and power to those who faithfully confess Him.

Duration: 1:08:36

Scripture: Matthew 10:8, Acts 3:6, Acts 14:3, Acts 14:15, Acts 14:17, Acts 14:22, 1 Corinthians 2:1

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the message of grace and redemption. He highlights that God loves His people and desires to show Himself faithful. The preacher also discusses how God grants signs and wonders to be done by His people's hands. He cautions against idolizing preachers or church leaders, emphasizing that the focus should always be on Jesus Christ. The sermon encourages listeners to open their hearts to Jesus and allow Him to transform their lives.

Transcript

This Bible study was recorded at Calvary Chapel of the Finger Lakes, and was taught by Pastor Bill Gallatin. This evening we're in the book of Acts, starting in chapter 14. Before we do chapter 14, because of some of the things that Paul experiences, I'd like to have you turn to Matthew chapter 10, something that Jesus taught to the disciples.

Now, you remember, Paul is now, the gospel is beginning to move, as Paul is the apostle, to the Gentiles, and Paul and Barnabas were in Antioch, Syria, ministering to the Lord, just worshiping the Lord, waiting on the Lord, and the Spirit of God came upon them, and then spoke to them, that they're to take the gospel into the area of Galatia, which really is the belly of Turkey today. And you can see that the church now is moving away from Jerusalem, up to the Gentile world, up toward Istanbul, and from there would move on up into all of Europe, and eventually from Europe over to Great Britain, to the United States, and as you go to the right, as you go off into Asia, from the belly of Turkey, you're going up toward Iran, up into the Soviet Union, and all points east. And so, you can see now where Satan's territory is being invaded.

Things that he's had under control through the religions of the world. All kinds of religions, all getting along together, tolerant of one another. And most of the religions of the world took pride in being tolerant of other faiths.

And you see, Satan doesn't mind that. He doesn't care how many different styles of religion there are, and he'll have everybody get along, but don't approach the truth. He'll design a system, a political system.

He'll work in a culture, make them deeply religious and devout. Design a religion that the government will make it legal to have shrines on every corner, to worship any way you desire. Another thing you have, and this proves against the Bible, as it says, there's nothing new under the sun.

Now, the new age is really old. It's just all, you know, starting up again. But one of the common things in the religious minds of the people in, you know, Paul's day, was that the spirits, or the angels, would come down in the shape of human beings to enlighten the cultures.

Gods would come down and visit mankind in physical form and mingle with the human race to enlighten, to give them, you know, greater intelligence, to bring their utopia on the earth and enlighten man in such a way that they couldn't do without them. They'd come and go. Really, all it was was the distortion of Genesis 6, again, when Satan tried to pollute the human race with angels and evil spirits before the flood judgment.

And it just continued on after the flood, and the Grecian culture, particularly, and the Roman culture had many of their shrines were to these beings that would come back and forth to enable the human race to be enlightened. Now, they didn't use the term channeling, but they had, you know, the exposure to these gods, Hermes and Mercury and Zeus and Jupiter and Diana, Aphrodite, Horus, Isis, Superman, Captain Marvel, Batman. I mean, it's amazing how, you know, you're going to get them in something somewhere for the children and then to get them maybe interested in the greater ones.

But this was the culture, this was the world, Satan's world, that the light of the gospel was coming. And so there's going to be tremendous resistance. Satan's not just going to lay back and say, Oh, there's just another religion now coming in.

We will be tolerant of extreme fundamental Christianity. It just doesn't work that way. And again, as we shared, I think, last week or Sunday, the Roman government was tolerant of every religion with the exception of Christianity.

You don't see in history where thousands upon thousands, millions of people who worshiped Aphrodite or Bacchus or Diana were thrown to the lions in the Coliseum. It was only the Christians. Only the Christians.

But Jesus said something interesting, and it's not a contradiction. He is the Prince of Peace. In fact, unless Christ is in someone's life, in their heart, and, you know, beginning to dominate our lives, you're not going to have peace.

There's no such thing as peace apart from Christ. Now, there may be chemical substitution in the central nervous system because of a drug or a tranquilizer for a while, but that's such a false peace, or alcohol, or a narcotic. But there's no real peace apart from Jesus Christ.

He's the Prince of Peace. Valium wears off. Librium, you know, florzine, and all the other stuff.

Whether the doctor gives it to us legally or you have your doctor on the street, it wears off. It's a false peace. But Jesus said something in Matthew 10.

He said in verse 32, Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. Now, what does that mean? Does that mean at the end of the age I have the guarantee of my salvation if I didn't deny Christ in this life? Certainly there's some truth there. Jesus said, if you're not for me, you're against me.

There really isn't that. Faith is active. True faith is active.

It's not passive. But what he's saying here, if you're living that life, and your life is a confession of mine, and you're going to face persecution, yea, and they that will live godly shall suffer persecution, Paul wrote young Timothy, you remember. You're entering into Satan's Roman territory, and your light is driving out darkness by your open confession in life for Christ.

Now, while that's happening down here, we need supernatural strength. So, as you're confessing Christ by your life, and your expression, and your conversation down here, Jesus is confessing to the Father, your faithful is down here, and then he's going to confess you to the Father to give you and impart you the strength and the comfort of the Holy Spirit that you need in any given situation. You remember Jesus told the early church that tarry ye in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high that you may be witnesses.

And that word witness in the Greek is marturis, or in other words, you're not afraid to give your life. You'll die and not be afraid. That you may be witnesses.

It's supernatural power. And so, as we confess our Lord and do not deny him, and shrink back through persecution or threat, we're confessing him down here. He's at the right hand of the Father.

He's our great high priest. He's confessing your situation down here. And there's the promise of strength.

Even if we may need an angel, and time and time again, in the Scriptures we see the children of God in situations needed angels, and God sent them. They didn't have to ask for them or pray for them. If they needed the angel, the angel would just show up.

You remember Paul on several occasions. The angels came to encourage Paul when he was in that tremendous storm in the Mediterranean. And all hope that they would survive was removed.

Not that Paul had little faith, but God designed it in such a way and that miraculous strength that Paul received had an effect on the Roman soldiers, and it gave Paul the chance to show the gospel or share the gospel with the Roman pagans as the ship crashed in Melita. But the Lord himself appeared to him to encourage him. Another time, the Lord sent an angel to strengthen and encourage Paul.

The Lord sent an angel to free Peter from jail, you remember. You remember Elijah was discouraged and wanted to quit. And he went out down into the Negev Desert, down south of Beersheba, on the way toward the Red Sea.

And he just sat down under a juniper tree and said, I just want to die. And he quit eating. And he felt a gentle nudge while he was asleep.

And he woke up to hear an angel was there. God sent an angel to encourage him and fixed breakfast for him. Had breakfast there for him.

So, whatever you may need, Jesus said, I will confess you before my Father. If you're faithful down here to confess me and not be some chameleon that you're only a Christian with other Christians. And then you can be whatever the crowd is that you're in just to be accepted.

You see, that's denial. That's playing Russian roulette with eternal security. If I'm really a child of God, I will be confessing Jesus Christ.

And he will give me the power. And it's interesting as we see in Acts tonight, the greater the persecution, and God allows persecution for greater power. It brings a greater anointing.

Greater supernatural strength from the Lord. And Jesus said in verse 33 of Matthew 10, Whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven. Then he said, Think not that I am come to send peace on earth.

I came not to send peace, but a sword. Now, he uses the allegory of the sword here because the sword divides. And I really believe what he's really speaking here is that the sword of the Spirit, the word of God to shake things up, to startle people, to bring a division, to wake them out of their spiritual slumber.

The delusion that Satan has placed upon them in their organized religion, no matter how devout they are. They're damned. They're lost.

The God of this world has blinded them. And yet they may have some priest, some pagan priest, or some false religious system saying, if you just go through these rituals, you're going to go to heaven. If you slip some little thing and have some little thing done to you, over you on your deathbed, you have a guarantee of going into paradise or heaven.

All the religions design those things. And so they're just kind of in that stupor of, oh, all I've got to do is just make sure I get there on this day of the week and this day of the week, and maybe submit to this ritual and have this done to the babies, the kids when they're born. And none of these things are biblical.

And people are going along living a life without any change whatsoever in these religious systems. And so here comes the gospel. And Jesus said, I'm going to divide.

I'm going to use the sword of the Spirit, the truth of God, to maybe stir things up between a husband and a wife. Think not that I've come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword.

I want to stir things up, shake things up, wake you up out of your stupor, your religious stupor. There are people who think that because they come to Calvary Chapel, that makes them a Christian. That doesn't make anybody a Christian.

That could be just as deadly as being a Hindu. If you're not born again. If we haven't realized the plan of salvation, the grace of God through Jesus Christ, giving His life on Calvary, the Lamb of God to take us away from the sin of the world, and the only offering for sin that can justify that God will accept is just blot out the transgression.

There's no hope for mankind. There's no other way for salvation. And so Jesus comes along and starts saying, Hey, you're being sprinkled with a little baby and doing an injury.

It may give you your guarantee of hell. Because you think that saves you. You've come out of some system that automatically redeems you.

There's not one verse in the Bible that has anything to do with that. That's not biblical truth. And that may upset a parent.

It may upset the parent who wants their baby to go to heaven because they had it sprinkled. Or maybe gone through a ritual at the age of 10 or 15 or whatever. And then to find out that those things don't work, that the Gospel says that doesn't work.

That's not in the Bible. And that can really stir things up and make people angry. And that's what Jesus wants to do.

I've come to set a man at variance against his father. I think of what happened with Gideon. God wanted to bring revival.

The whole nation, remember, had gone into it again. They kept drifting back into this Baal worship where they worshiped the Queen of Heaven. And God had come along with a prophet and get the people back to Him.

And they destroyed the shrines and their droves to the Queen. And another generation, they drift back to the worship of that female deity. It was all the way from Babylon.

Many of the religions today all incorporate the worship of some female deity. And God told Gideon he's going to start a revival to bring the people back to Him. And his parents were worshipping the Queen.

And they had a shrine that they built in the local village, you remember, and dedicated it to her. To Baal and the Queen of Heaven. And the Lord told Gideon, I want you to go destroy it.

And Gideon, boy that really, you just think, what's mom and dad going to think? Destroy their shrine? God says, you love me? Do you want revival? Do you really want your parents saved, Gideon? Do you want the nation brought back and the blessings of God back? And so he thought about it. And he said, boy I really do, Lord. But you know, he was a little scared, so he went at night.

He did it at night. When mom and dad were thinking. But he went there with an axe and just beat the thing to pieces.

Cut down the beautiful garden that they had for the Queen. And he wrecked the thing. And slipped out of the way from it.

And boy the next day the townspeople went to do their thing with the Queen. And they found out that their shrine was destroyed. And Gideon's father, he was so upset.

And that's exactly what God wanted. It'd be like if, of course nobody would do anything like that, but dynamite Moroni over there in Palmyra. I mean, that would make the picture.

If somebody would just put some dynamite or you know, do you realize what that would do? Of course nobody would do anything like that. But I've come to set a father and a son against each other. And the daughter against her mother.

Maybe they were both, you know, under the delusion of this religion. This system. And here comes the Apostle Paul.

Here comes the Apostles. Here comes the truth. And pretty soon one person in the family gets saved, gets born again.

And boy, instead of things being peaceful, it's just the opposite. Exactly as Jesus said. To wake people up.

And the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. It's hard enough to get a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law to agree. I mean, boys, you do get them to be fun friends.

Then they come in with Christianity, you know. And then all of a sudden it starts to stir things up. And it says, A man's foe shall be they of his own household.

He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. And he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Then he goes on to finish it by denying self.

Taking up our crosses and following him as he leads us and guides us. How badly do we want our relatives saved? How badly do we want our friends saved? How badly do we want revival? You see. Well, you see, the Apostle Paul is taking the message of the truth into a darkened area, but into the control of Satan.

Everybody getting along good, tolerant of each other's religion. A wonderful society. Very sensual, very materialistic.

The Roman Empire, the Grecian Empire. Very religious, very educated. And here comes the Apostle Paul with Barnabas.

Now, this is, again, you remember in the earlier chapter, God allowed persecution as they went from Antioch in Syria over to Cyprus, then from Cyprus up to the coast of Turkey, Pamphylia, and now they're going inland. They're going up north. And because of the persecution that we saw in Pamphylia, God used that to move the Apostles further inland to spread the gospel in other areas.

And Satan saying, Man, here he comes. He's coming into this territory. Now, notice how God prepared them for the pressures they were going to face.

Notice verse 52 at the end of chapter 13. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. Persecution brings power.

Remember, they'd been sharing the gospel and people were getting saved. And so the Jews, you know, stirred up honorable women. And before you know it, there's a ruckus and things are getting tense and they're being persecuted and being threatened.

And God's allowing that to move them on because Jesus said, When that takes place, shake the dust off your feet and move to another city. And so they're being obedient. They're moving on.

But at the same time, God is filling them with the Holy Ghost. He's equipping them for the next town. Sometimes I think we get a wrong idea when the persecution, you know, begins.

It's time to just quit everything. And here God's using the persecution to fill us with more of the presence of Himself or the power of the Holy Spirit for the next situation He's going to use us in. And so now they pass in Iconium, which is up some 40 miles from where they were, going north with a drift toward the east into the inner belly or heart of Turkey or Galatia.

And they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews and so spake. And this is interesting. It's not so much the words but the way they spoke.

And so spake they that a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed. Now, how did Paul speak? Was it his tremendous intellect? And we know that Paul was a genius. He's considered one of the five geniuses of the human race.

The Apostle Paul. His mind. Was it his vocabulary? His education? His theological background? You know, it's interesting.

But it says here, the way they spoke and so spake that it just captured the hearts of people. How did Paul speak? See, this encourages me. I've heard people speak that are so eloquent.

You just go, you know, Lord, I can't speak like that. I have a terrible vocabulary. I can't even pronounce words right.

I can't get the tenses right. Sometimes I'll think one thing and something else will come out. You see, that's what brings me glory, Bill.

It's the foolish things that bring me glory. Turn to 1 Corinthians 2. This is how Paul spake. I remember one time the Lord said, Bill, I don't need your adjectives.

I don't need your clever stories, really. Nothing wrong with humor now and then and bringing a little sidebar in here and there. But you know, there's only one thing God really honors.

That's His Word. That's the only thing God's Holy Spirit anoints is the Word. And I discovered I don't have to be charismatic.

I don't have to run back and forth across the stage and use hairspray and fancy clothing and sweat and spit and put on a big show to get the attention of the people. Notice what Paul says about his preaching. 1 Corinthians 2, verse 1, And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech.

That gives me encouragement. I mean, yeah, God can use. He can ride into Jerusalem.

He can ride into a skating rink on an ass. Or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. He just shared the truth of God.

That was one of the great things about John the Baptist, you remember. It says he performed no miracle. Yet Jesus said he was greater than Moses and Abraham and greater than Elijah and Elisha.

He said, but he performed no miracles. All he said about me was true, though. He had a good understanding of the character and the personality of Jesus Christ and he portrayed Jesus in such a beautiful, simple, truthful way.

He gave a true picture of Jesus Christ. I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness.

Paul wasn't some boastful, loud, arrogant, self-confident, charismatic, with a dynamic vocabulary kind of a guy. In fact, you remember, it's this letter to the Corinthians that he's writing in defense of himself because they couldn't believe that he is the great apostle Paul. He seemed like just a hunched-over little guy with a

big nose.

Not much of a good-looker. He wasn't charismatic. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.

And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of men's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. In other words, when he spoke, he spoke the truth concerning Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit anointed that. So that's the greatest thing we could ever do is share the Bible with people, not our feelings.

You see, God anoints his Word. It's his Word that will not return void. It will not fall to the ground.

I think some people, you know, try so hard to impress the people and get the message across. They do so many things drawing such attention to themselves. When people leave their churches, they talk about the preacher.

It's almost like a carnival atmosphere. Our prayer is that when you leave, you're thinking about Jesus Christ. Something has happened on the inside, a new understanding.

Somehow the Spirit of God has anointed his Word, and you're thinking of Jesus Christ and nothing else. Or we're miserable failures. If you're not falling in love with Jesus, what a tragedy if you fall in love with your church or the pastor or an elder or a musician.

And you're enamored with a Christian musician more than Jesus Christ or a Christian pastor. And so Paul, it was the way he spoke. It's the things he brought forth.

He didn't put on some show. It says, they sow faith the way they spoke. But how? In weakness and fear and trembling, not with enticing words or clever speech.

It says, a great multitude, both of the Jews and also of the Greeks, believed God's Spirit, honoring the Word of God. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and made their minds evil-affected against the brethren. See, that's quick.

Satan's working. Here comes the division. Long time, therefore, abode they speaking boldly.

Now, isn't that amazing to me? Persecution starts. They're stirring up people against them and they decide to stay a long time. They don't say, well, let's pack it up.

It's time to leave. Well, I guess God didn't call us here. There's just a lot of trouble here.

Let's just pack it up and leave. Let's go back to Jerusalem. People are saying things about us and yelling at us and there's persecution.

Isn't that amazing? But they were anointed before they got there for this persecution. They were equipped by the past persecution and given greater strength. And look what it did for them.

When the new persecution began, they didn't quit and run. They didn't pack it in and leave. They stirred up Gentiles against them and so they decide we're staying for a while.

This has really got Satan worked up. That just proves that we're where we should be. That just proves that God's doing something here.

Satan's so worried that he's stirring up the community against us. So a long time. Therefore, abode they speaking boldly in the Lord.

Which gave testimony unto the word of His grace. The more they were thrashed verbally and lied about and persecuted, the more notice they shared the word of God's grace. God's forgiveness.

Oh, to be able to tell people that God wants to forgive you. That God has so much longsuffering and patience no matter what your sin is or has been. He is willing to forgive you.

And God loves to forgive. God loves to show mercy. To reveal His mercy.

You see, that's the gospel. Grace. You remember Zechariah, when he is told to prophesy, to encourage Zerubbabel.

And Zerubbabel sees this impossible task. A handful of Jews coming back from Babylon with no money, no skills really to rebuild the temple. He sees his country and sees the devastation after 70 years after Babylon was destroyed through Nebuchadnezzar.

And here God's told him He wants them to rebuild and He's going to return the people and restore the country. And he's just overwhelmed. And the Lord tells him that it's by His Spirit.

It's not by might nor by power, Zerubbabel. You've started this work and your hands will lay the foundation. I'm going to stay working in your life and as impossible as the task looks right now, by my Spirit it's going to be accomplished.

It's not by might nor by power. And He says, and this mountain, and this is how you remove the mountain, by crying or shouting of grace, grace. Not repent, repent.

Grace, grace. That God loves His people. And God loves to redeem.

And God loves to show Himself faithful. That's the message, you see. And notice as they're sharing the message of grace, God granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Now, it's interesting how God, in different ways, in different cities, does different things. The tragedy in church today is if God does a sign and a wonder, they say He has to do it all the time. Now, they had just left, remember, the earlier area of Antioch and Pisidia.

God did no signs and wonders up there. But in this area down here, God is following with signs and wonders as He said He would in Mark 16. Verse 20.

After they would teach George, He said, signs and wonders would follow. God would work with them. In this particular area, He's using signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

And as soon as they go to the next area, no signs and wonders are done. I think it's wrong to try and say, it has to work this way all the time. There's another imbalance in the church today.

And you never know when God's going to do the sign or the wonder. That's His prerogative. The promise is they will follow.

If it's needed in this area, they will follow. Now, too many churches today try to get signs and wonders to get people to show up. And they try to build a church on signs and wonders.

And so, you walk in and you see people lined up. You see a lot of chaos as they try to, you know, promote these things before. And sometimes the Word of God is not even taught.

And so, so many people have these tremendous experiences, and yet they still don't grow. You see no victory in their life. They keep thinking they're going to have demons cast out.

Because nothing's being put in. It's the entrance of the Word that heals. By His Word.

He sent His Word and He healed His people. The entrance of the Word give us light. And He's magnified His Word above His name, not miracles.

He promises that they will follow. In this particular area, He's doing signs and wonders. But the multitude, the city was divided.

Exactly what Jesus Christ wanted. Wake up world. Religious world.

Wake up marriage. Maybe there's division in your marriage tonight. And it may be Jesus working in such a way.

Wake up. Return to the Lord. Change an attitude.

Change a concept. God wants to bless. And remember, He doesn't divide to destroy.

He divides to make whole. If God did not design division in His universe and the scheme of life, you wouldn't exist today. There'd be nothing but one big ear sitting there looking at me.

But thank God, He designs division to bring beauty and to bring order. Do you realize if cells didn't divide, you may be a 160 pound nose sitting there. Wouldn't that be something? Some noses are big enough.

I might look at mine when I was younger. I don't know what's happening. I don't even drink in this thing.

I don't know what it is. Everything seems to be expanding except my IQ. But just as Jesus said, when you invade Satan's territory, particularly religious, devout areas, because you see, that's deadlier than drugs and alcohol.

That's deadlier than atheism. Someone at the end of the delusion that because they're devout and deeply religious, they're automatically going to heaven. And so Jesus wants to invade that area.

Those people are really captive. And so the division has taken place. The multitude of the city was divided in part held with the Jews and part with the apostles.

And when there was an assault made both of the Gentiles and also of the Jews with their rulers, to use them despitefully and to stone them, they were aware of it and fled into Lystra and Derbe, cities like Chaonia, into the region that lies round about. So now they're going further. As they've gotten to Antioch, now the persecution is moving and they're making a loop and heading back down south now towards the Mediterranean and the inner belly of Turkey or Galatia.

And where they're going, you see, the gospel is touching lives. God's allowing this to move them about. And so as Jesus said, OK, I haven't done something supernaturally here.

Use the mind that I gave you. And again, here's the weakness sometimes, the imbalance of the church. God does a deliverance supernaturally in one area and so the person thinks, well, this is the way He's going to do it all the time.

You could get killed. He may work supernaturally this year. Next year you may be in a situation and God says, use the mind I gave you.

Make a decision. Do something to protect yourself. Here, you see, they fled.

God can send the earthquake and collapse the jail. He can send an angel and lead you out in the middle of the night. But the same man who had the earthquake and was freed from the jail, he had to be let down from a Damascus jail in a basket once in his life.

And there they preached the gospel. And as he's preaching the gospel, there sat a certain man at Lystra infinite in his feet, being a cripple from his mother's womb who never had walked. So here's a man who none of the false religions of the world could do anything for, crippled all of his life.

And here's the Apostle Paul with the truth of the gospel. With the truth concerning Jesus Christ. You can imagine what they must have gone through with all their temples and all their shrines, paying all their money, going through all the different rituals probably to get their child healed that he could walk when he's been crippled.

And now, the light of the gospel is coming to his life. The same heard Paul speak. Who steadfastly be on him.

Paul locked his eyes on him and was staring at him. Knew that he was responding. That the Holy Spirit was beginning to work in him.

And Paul could tell and he was just staring at him. Knew that the Spirit of God was preparing this man's heart. Because God was going to do something.

And he perceived that he had faith to be healed. Now, there's all kinds of gifts of the Spirit to start coming into operation here in the Apostle's life. First of all, you see the gift of prophecy.

He's prophesying or teaching the Word of God. And the Spirit of God is taking the Word of God and preparing somebody for a miracle of life. As he's sitting there listening, Paul sees, you can just see the work of the Spirit and Paul locks eyes with him.

Because he beheld him steadfastly. Just really looking at him and knowing that God's veering in on this guy. Then he has discernment.

He discerns that this guy's being prepared for a touch from God. And then Paul has the faith to speak forth what God wants to do for this man. He discerns that the man has the faith.

That Jesus has given the man the faith to respond. And then there's a miracle. The gift of a miracle takes place.

And the gift of healing. All these things, these gifts of the Spirit operating in one event. And you know what? God still works that way.

I remember one time in Ohio. Pastor Jack and I were together. And we're in this church, a denominational church.

And we were sitting towards the back of the church. And we were on the right-hand side of the church. And we saw a blind person.

Now, as I looked at him, as he walked in, I could tell by the way he was eating that he was blind. And I'm way in the back. And I see him walking across the front.

The next thing I know, I see these people take a turn and start coming toward me. And the Lord says, I want you to pray for him. And I was really frightened.

It was bad enough because we had long-haired beards in those days. And this church, everybody had a coat and a tie on. And already we were being stared at.

And then the Lord says, I want you to stand up and pray for this man for healing. And as he was coming down the aisle, I'm thinking, well, maybe, Lord, you're going to stop him up front and I won't have to do it. But as he's getting closer and closer, I knew the Lord was going to do something.

I knew it. And the discernment came that they were going to bring him right. Now, this is amazing, too.

Because this giant church was really kind of a dead church. It could seat probably 500 and there were probably only about 30 people in it. Scattered all around the place.

And so there was all these faces on the way back as they're leading him back that they could have just turned into any aisle and sat, you know, any pew and sat down. But the Lord gave me the discernment. It's like, he's coming right back and they're going to sit next to you.

You're going to have to do it, Bill. And sure enough, they did. They walked all the way back and Jack and I are sitting there.

And I stood up, laid hands on him, and prayed for God to heal him, give him new sight. And he had like, there was no pupils or anything. It's just like a film.

He had no dark glasses on. He had just like white. And the amazing thing is, right before our very eyes, all of a sudden, something happened as I put his head back as I prayed for him and his eyes were right there.

The Lord gave him his eyes right in front of us. And he looked at us and that's the last I saw of the man. Now, the amazing thing is, after that happened, they turned around, walked back up to the front of the church and sat down.

After the service in the church, we left. I know nothing. Whatever happens to the man, I know nothing.

I don't know whether he got his eyesight completely back or what. All I know is, God told me to do this and I did it. I tried to get out of it at first.

And the Lord told me he was going to bring him right back and have him come right into the aisle next to us. I don't know where the man is today, whatever happened. But I knew it was going to happen.

The Lord showed me, he told me, he was going to do it. I have never had anything happen like that since then. That was over 20 years ago.

And I don't know what the end of the story was. We'll maybe find out in heaven. But it's amazing how, if you are in his situation, how God begins to work and show you things, that he does it.

Now, it wasn't my faith. And I don't know to this day if that man has his eyesight. But at that moment, his eyes came and rolled down and he had eyes.

And the people saw it. It didn't change the church at all. We were in the town for another maybe year, year and a half I think before we left.

Don't know what happened. I do know this. The pastor did not believe in Genesis and creation.

The pastor believed in evolution. So, there's a problem right there. We found out it was the Baptist church and the pastor didn't believe in creation.

Biggest Baptist church in town. But Paul saw this man and he perceived that God was going to do something in his life. Now, here's where Paul's faith came in.

He said with a loud voice, I stand upright on my feet. And he leaped and walked. Now, Paul didn't do it.

God did it. Paul just spoke something he knew God was going to do because he knew that God was putting the faith in the man to respond. It wasn't some impulsive thing just, you know, quoting a Scripture.

Hoping it would work. You watch what's going to happen. Well, you won't be able to see unless you're left after the rapture what's going to take place.

And they called Barnabas Jupiter. That would be Zeus. The Latin for Zeus.

And Paul Mercurius or Hermas in the Greek. Because he was the chief speaker. And then the priest of Jupiter which was before their city brought oxen and garlands into the gate and would have done sacrifice with the people.

Bringing wreaths and flowers and they're going to put them around the necks of Paul and Barnabas and sacrifice an animal and worship them. Now, this is more dangerous for Paul than having his life threatened. To be exalted by man for something God did and to receive it.

Boy, Satan is so clever. If he can't frighten you out of the ministry and keep you from doing anything through fear and threaten you to get you to quit then he'll try to exalt you and destroy you. That's even more dangerous and more subtle.

Oh, aren't you something. Oh, how God is using you. Oh, you have such a magnificent voice.

Oh, when you pray. Oh, you're such a wonderful Christian musician. Oh, has God anointed you.

This is the most dangerous time of Paul's life. To be exalted. To be praised.

It's the most dangerous time ever. The attempt to touch the glory. Aren't you something.

Which when Paul, or when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of that they tore their clothes and ran in among the people crying out. Now, you know what? I was thinking, boy, if I was there I'd have a hard time tearing one of my Hawaiian shirts. I mean, I would correct them quickly but I don't know if I want to tear one of my Hawaiian shirts for some stupid thing like that.

Saying, sirs, why do you do these things? We also are men of like passions with you and preach unto you that you should turn from these vanities unto the living God which made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that therein. We're just men. We're nothing but instruments that God has used.

You remember Peter and James and John going into the temple in the afternoon prayer time at Jerusalem. And the crippled man was there and he asked for alms. Remember, he was begging.

His parents had probably taken him there every day and then he's an older man or maybe he made some kind of a little thing he'd scoot around Jerusalem, you know, in his crippled way, accepting his fate and his life and living, you know, on the sympathy of people. No hope. Begging.

And he asked for money, you remember. And isn't it wonderful that they didn't have money to give him? And isn't it wonderful because they had nothing to give him they didn't feel that they couldn't go in and worship. Because Peter said, silver and gold have we none.

Do you realize that if it was someone else and they had some money they might have just thrown a little shekel in a cup for the poor beggar. He said, silver and gold have I none. But he had something far greater to give.

He said, such as I have give I to thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth stand up and walk. You don't have to be a cripple the rest of your life.

You're not an alcoholic all your life. You're not a drug addict all your life. You're not a murderer the rest of your life.

You're not a sinner. You're a new creature in Christ. Old things are passed away.

Behold, all things become new. And he stood up and he was healed. And all the people rejoicing and they were exalting Peter.

And Peter said, men and brethren, why do you stare at us as though by our own hands we have done this amazing as though there is some righteousness in us. What an opportunity to stand there and say by my faith and my devotion and my prayer time and my denial of self and my Bible reading and my understanding and depth of the Scriptures I knew just how to pray for this man and touch the glory. It's so wonderful to see that they just said why are you looking at us as though you know, we're something.

Jesus did this. And that was it. No big deal.

No fanfare. No calling the papers and you know starting a healing ministry. Because you see the purpose of the gospel is to share the truth of the word of God.

The signs and the wonders may follow but the purpose in the day of Pentecost Peter preached. He didn't have healing lines. He didn't even remember preaching the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He preached the cross. Even though Joel was being fulfilled and the spirit was poured out and Pentecost started and people were baptized in the Holy Spirit and they asked about it he didn't do a whole thing on the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He preached the cross.

The problem with the church today you see they get all worked up over some of the things that aren't the most important things. The blessings of God. But you know they're secondary.

The most important thing is the cross. Christ crucified. Christ risen.

You can be saved. You can have your sins forgiven. You don't have to be a triple the rest of your life emotionally.

Not even physically if God decides to raise you up and save you. But sometimes it's the triple and the disease is on the inside. Some people are whole and can walk are still crippled.

You may have two legs but your two legs keep taking you into a bar. You're triple. You may have two eyes but you can't stay away from pornography and your computer.

You're triple. You're blind. You see.

And so Jesus has to do the greater work on the inside. And that's the purpose of the gospel. Whatever your problem is tonight, today.

Well however crippled you are Jesus Christ can make you stand and walk. He can set you free. And it's supernatural.

And he's willing to do it. If you'll just open your heart. And then if he does it you don't glorify the person who said you'll do it.

You give the glory to Jesus. And so they say wait a minute. You're looking at the wrong person here.

You're getting all excited. We're not gods and we didn't do this. The living God which made heaven and earth and the sea and all things that are therein.

He's the one who's done this. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. He allowed all this ignorance in the past.

He winked at it. But now he's bringing the truth. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with food and gladness.

And with these things scarce restrained they the people that they had not done sacrifice on. They could hardly keep the people from saying oh you're something you know. And they just didn't want to hear it.

People are looking for a God. People look for someone to worship. Someone to adulate.

Someone to wear their hair like or dress like or look like. People are so dissatisfied with life if they just know someone has fame that they think accomplish something they're willing to even change the way they look to identify with their God. There's nothing but a human.

Oh to know the true and the living God and not know what he looked like. So that sets me free. I can still look like Bill.

Because we walk by faith not by sight. And to know him personally. Now look how fickle the people are.

Look how quickly the crowd changes. First they're calling him God and then there came here certain Jews from Antioch. The guys from Antioch followed them down here to this area.

And they had greater persuasion. Kind of like Jesus. One minute what are they saying about Jesus Christ.

Hosanna, Hosanna, save now. And they're ready to worship him. And then just in a few hours crucify him, crucify him.

So these Jews from Antioch came further. And from Iconium who persuaded the people and having stoned Paul drew him out of the city supposing he had been dead. One minute they're going to claim him to be Mercury and the next minute the mob frenzy of a crowd.

How quickly people can be swayed. And moved. Now it's very possible.

You remember Paul when he met Jesus on the road to Damascus. Jesus said he was going to suffer many things for his namesake. As he brings glory to the Lord.

You remember Paul was writing to Colossian Christians and told them not to be concerned by all the things he suffered. It was designed. And there were things left behind for Jesus.

And identifying with Christ and his fellowship of the sufferings that we needed to fill up those things which were behind. Now here it's very possible that God allowed them to be stoned and Paul to be put to death to prove to them he wasn't a dead man. But God allowed this.

So you see they couldn't put the glory on and to realize that he wasn't just a man. Sometimes when we least expect it. Not that we're doing anything wrong.

But God, if there's someone by just chance maybe esteeming someone higher than they ought. And it's the secret admiration that it should not be there. And God begins to see it and says you know I'm going to have to do something to this person.

I'm going to allow something to happen that you'll see this person as they really are. You're elevating them higher than you should. And they're almost replacing you in your life.

And then all of a sudden God may allow a humbling thing and all of a sudden you realize wow they aren't perfect. And you get back to Jesus. Now God had a tremendous purpose in this.

It's very possible again to prove to them that he's not a God. But then it's amazing what God does with Paul. Now he devotes the whole chapter practically to what happened here.

Some 15, 20 years later he writes concerning this event and it's amazing what Paul learned through this and how it changed Paul's life and made him greater. And it gave God the opportunity to show his power over death. Because God brought him back to life.

And the amazing thing is Paul went right back to town. So it shows you, you see as we look at these things you go, I don't know if I can handle what Brother So-and-so went through. When you're going to go through it you're going to handle it.

God has promised that no matter what the persecution he gives the power. Don't shrink back because of an if. Because you don't know what's going to take place.

Don't allow someone else's tragedy that puts fear in you and paralyzes you and stops you from going ahead with Jesus Christ and taking your step of faith. God will give you the strength you need. He will give you the strength they needed in their situation.

You just may see the dead body. You just may read about what this horrible thing took place in the paper. You go, I couldn't handle that.

And when it happens to you if it does you will handle it. God is faithful. All the reporters, it has found the body.

And in my imagination Satan says, oh, what they went through you wouldn't be able to handle that. Don't you sell out for Jesus Christ. You better just start, you know, throwing the switch now and holding back a little bit.

You don't know what's going to happen to you. Who cares what happens to me? I want Jesus to be glorified and he's promised to give me the strength and have the measure of the spirit and the comfort for any situation I need. I look at people that aren't enjoying their Christian life.

They're such chameleons. They're so afraid. They're judging their life by what someone else went through and they're holding back because they think, I couldn't do that.

God doesn't ask us to do anything whereby he doesn't give us the power. Why be miserable? Christianity is so wonderful and so exciting. It's the greatest life there is.

And some people are so bored. Oh, I want to go to church tonight. You want to go to church Sunday? What do you want to do this week? Want to do something Christian? I mean, it's almost like there's... What other life is there? God promises to keep us.

God doesn't break his promises. You have nothing to fear. He said, I'll not leave you comfortless.

I will come to you. He said he would give us the power to be the witness. We can be filled afresh daily with his spirit.

We can get up in the morning and wait upon him and be filled for that day. Any time during the day if we need a fresh filling or strength, we can just take the time to be filled and ask and God says you'll receive that your joy may be full. And remember, they were persecuted and it says they were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

Believe me, the greater the persecution because of your faithfulness for Jesus, the greater the filling, the greater the power that God will give you. Next week, we're going to see more about what happened to Paul when he was stoned and what God did and how it affected his life. And we all stand.

Wait a minute, what's next week? Next week is the first week of communion. It's communion. We're going to have to wait.

We have communion next week. But you read it, study it, and look at the life of Paul. What a dynamic life.

What an example for us. But he was a man, weak. He said, I came before you with weakness and fear and trembling.

He was a man with like passions like us. Like Elijah. We can do nothing apart from Christ.

But like Paul said, we can do all things which strengthen us not. Want some fresh strength tonight? Now, I've been speaking tonight and only by God's grace in some area maybe God has spoken to you or

challenged you or encouraged you. But I can guarantee you this.

If you want a fresh touch from the Lord, we can agree together. Because the Bible says, if any two of you agree together, if touching anything on this earth, you will have it of your Father in heaven. Would you like a fresh measure of the Holy Spirit tonight before you leave? Now, first of all, it says, if I regard iniquity within my heart, the Lord will not hear me.

So, if you've got secret sin, deal with it right now. If you've got secret sin, it's not going to do you any good to ask for a fresh filling of the Spirit. The vessel's got to be clean.

So, ask the Lord to forgive you. Ask Him to cleanse you in the blood. And He's willing.

There's no one who can go to Him and He won't refuse you. Say, Lord, forgive me. Deal with it right now.

And then you grab the hand next to you. David, you've got to get over there. Come on.

This lady here. Everybody get a hand. There's no... We're not going to do that.

We're a body here of believers. Somebody get a hold of a hand. And we're going to ask the Lord for a fresh measure of the Holy Spirit.

Okay? Oh, one other thing. If you're not saved, it's not going to help either. It's important that you're saved.

So, if you haven't asked Jesus into your heart, He wants to come into your heart. He wants to save you and fill you with His love. So, ask Jesus into your heart to be your Lord and Savior.

Ask Him to forgive you of your sinful life. You want a new life with Jesus. Okay? Heavenly Father, we stand here before you as your children an hour and a half with you tonight.

We pray that we've been faithful to you, Lord. We desire to know more of you and experience more of your love. And we ask the Lord to give us the power, that fresh filling and measure of the Holy Spirit that we not be afraid.

Lord, your Spirit is so gentle and so wonderful. So, we ask now that you fill us. And we thank you, Holy Spirit, that we can just receive by faith.

So, move now, Lord, in each heart. Each heart that has been cleansed by the blood that desires more of you. Work now, Father, to impress you in Jesus' name.

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