

Acts Highlights - Part 5

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the importance of prayer, the role of the Holy Spirit, and the principles of evangelism as illustrated in the book of Acts.

Duration: 36:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Acts 13:5, Acts 13:13, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 2 Timothy 4:2, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of having a specific ministry for Jesus and not being lazy in fulfilling it. They also discuss the concept of worship, highlighting that it goes beyond just singing and includes seeking God through prayer and fasting. The sermon references the story of Herod, who accepted worship from the people and was struck with sickness as a result. The speaker also touches on the topic of judgment, acknowledging its unpopularity but emphasizing its significance in understanding the forces of darkness in the world. Throughout the sermon, the speaker references various Bible passages, including Ephesians 6:10-20, to support their points.

Transcript

Zion Fellowship, thank you for your prayers. We know some of you are faced with tough situations. Again, does anyone need special prayer? George.Berwer at om.org and I will pray for you specifically.

Let's just pray together before we look at three more chapters in this great book of the Holy Spirit, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, called in our Bibles, the Acts of the Apostles. Father, we thank you for what you've done even in this past week, as people in so many parts of the world have come to know you personally. We thank you for the many challenges from the book of Acts.

Lord, as we look at these very crucial chapters of 12, 13, and 14, open our eyes and don't let us, Lord, just be hearers of the word, but to be doers. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Once again, this week, I'd like to begin with a quote that I think is so relevant. I recently put it on my Facebook. I know some of you are my Facebook friends.

Just 20 minutes ago, I typed up my 82nd birthday blog for Facebook. Some of you may remember my 80th birthday. I celebrated over the whole year in 100 different rail station locations, asking people to give 80 pounds or \$80 or any currency to my great Bible fund for Africa.

Well, for my 82nd, I'm asking people to give 82 pounds or dollars for their crisis situation in India. That's just gone on Facebook a few moments ago. As we think of all that's going on with the virus and now with all these demonstrations all over the world, people being killed in the streets, I'm reminded of this great, great quote.

We see this truth also in the book of Acts, very clearly. This quote is from A. W. Tozer, serving in an emergency. Certainly, those of you who are working in the medical field, you are serving in an emergency.

This is about the bigger emergency that all of us as God's people are facing. It's from A. W. Tozer, a little book, gems from Tozer. The fall of man has created a perpetual crisis.

It will last until sin has been put down and Christ reigns over a redeemed and restored world. Until that time, the earth remains a disaster area and its inhabitants live in a state of extraordinary emergency. To me, it has always been difficult to understand those evangelical Christians who insist upon living in the crisis as if no crisis existed.

They say they serve the Lord, but they divide their days as to leave plenty of time to play and loaf, enjoy the pleasures of the world as well. They are at ease while the world burns. What a great challenge.

Turn with us to Acts chapter 12, and immediately, of course, we have a crisis situation. King Herod Agrippa, verse 1, began to persecute some of the believers in the church. He had the apostle James, John's brother, killed with a sword.

When Herod saw how much this pleased the Jewish leaders, he arrested Peter during the Passover celebration and imprisoned him. And so we're opening up again with a prison situation. And they didn't want to take any chances with Peter.

And so we noticed they even had him chained to two soldiers. Verse 6, the night before Peter was to be placed on trial, he was asleep, chained between two soldiers and others standing guard at the prison gate. And then we read that the church, especially, was praying.

Hallelujah. That's what can make all the difference in the world. And soon, we have him delivered from prison.

And he goes to the house. Verse 12, after a little thought, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many were gathered for prayer. Again, we see this bokeh-back emphasis on prayer.

And this one makes it clear that it was a prayer gathering. It was a prayer meeting. If you follow the history of the church, especially in the Western world, you will know that starting about 30 years ago, there started to be a great diminishing of people going to prayer meetings.

And then someone wrote a book, supposedly for pastors, saying, when you take over and you become the pastor of the church, if there's anything that's sort of difficult, you have to keep pushing to keep it going. It's better to just drop it. In the coming years, not necessarily because of that book, tens of thousands of prayer meetings disappeared from the scene in the United States, Canada, and to some degree here in Europe.

Praise God for every exception. And we know there are prayer meetings in which it's not possible for people to go because of their job. So we're not judging anybody.

But we're just going back to this biblical challenge. When there's a crisis, we need to gather for prayer. And of course, the rest of the chapter is about him arriving at the house.

The people initially didn't even believe it was him. And it's just an incredible challenge that in a crisis, in an emergency, we should gather. That doesn't mean it's the only thing we should do.

Now the rest of the chapter, we also pick up, because for me, the key chapter is this morning, is chapter 13. But in the latter part of chapter 12, we again find a very difficult situation. And we'll just read that.

Now Herod, verse 20, was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they sent a delegation to make peace with him because their cities were dependent upon Herod's country and for their food. They made friends with Blastus, Herod's personal assistant, and an appointment with Herod was granted.

When the day arrived, Herod put on the royal robe, sat on the throne, and made a speech to them. The people gave him a great ovation, shouting, it is the voice of God, not of man. And then something very startling happens.

Instantly, the angel of the Lord struck Herod with a sickness because he accepted the people's worship instead of giving glory to God. And he was consumed with worms and died. God's good news was spreading rapidly.

And there were many new believers. When Barnabas and Saul had finished their mission in Jerusalem, they returned to Antioch, taking John Mark with them. And of course, this is an example of judgment.

Perhaps the most unpopular thing to talk about in a modern church in the Western world is judgment. I was in a church service, and the pastor shared on this subject, and I just felt it was so powerful. It was so relevant.

And it was just a reminder of the whole message of salvation is tied with judgment, avoiding judgment because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on the cross. Everyone is already saved. They're already going to be saved.

Then why would God send his only son to die on the cross for sin? And so we are saved from judgment. It's very difficult to understand judgment. Some feel that the situation in the world right now is a manifestation of God's judgment.

Even as we read so much about this in the Old Testament, it's not easy to understand at all. But what we know, this is an aspect of God that is tied with total justice, total holiness, and we cannot just lay it to one side. Moving on in our limited time to chapter 13, I have to confess, this is the chapter I've preached about more than any other chapter in the book of Acts.

Partly because sometimes when I've taken meetings, and I've been all over the world taking meetings for close to 60 years, sometimes I only get one opportunity. And so I have to choose something that I feel is really going to go deep into the person's mind and heart. And so sometimes I choose chapter 13 in the book of Acts.

I have a title for this message, Seven Dynamic, Challenging, Biblical Principles of the Book of Acts, Chapter 13. And I hope perhaps you can make a list of these seven principles. They're very clear in this passage that we're going to read right now.

Chapter 13. Among the prophets and teachers at the church in Antioch of Syria were Barnabas Simeon Cole, the black man, Lucius from Cyrene, Menead, child and companion of King Herod Antipas, and Saul. One day, as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, Dedicate Barnabas and Saul to the special work I have for them.

So after fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them, and they sent them on their way. Sent out by the Holy Spirit, Saul and Barnabas went down to the seaport of Seleucia, and there sailed for the island of Cyprus. There in the town of Salinas, they went to the Jewish synagogues and preached the Word of God.

John Mark was with them as their assistant. Seven biblical principles that we can all have functioning in our own lives through the work of grace, through the work of the Holy Spirit. The first principle is the principle of prayer, the principle of the church, the local church.

Now this church was relatively new. We read previously that due to the persecution, believers were scattered from Jerusalem, and some of them ended up in Antioch. And Paul and Barnabas, with John Mark, later by the way he left, they went to Antioch to help establish this church.

And as we think of global missions, we should never just think of like Operation Mobilization or YWAM or Agape or Child of Angels or all these different agencies that God has raised up because the world is so big, there's so many people to be reached, and the world is so complicated. But we need to realize none of this would happen if it wasn't for the local church. I heard a great Christian leader who's now wanting to support what some people are calling traditional mission societies.

I never thought OM would be put in that category. He said, well, we pay tribute to the mission societies in the past, but now God is working more through the local church. So he's a great Bible teacher.

That is total error. He's never studied missionary history. It has always been the local church.

And many of the people who established these various mission agencies and fellowships, it happened because they were praying together with people in the local church, and because the local church is willing to support them. And in my own case, I didn't have a strong church relationship because my childhood church didn't believe in the Bible, didn't believe in missions very much. And I came to Christ outside the church in the Billy Graham Dean.

But that church still had an influence in my life as I really looked back carefully. A new church was being planted just near that church of people who were holding to the Bible, it's a Baptist church. And I went there on a Wednesday evening, and I asked that they pray for me because the Lord had led us to Mexico.

And they rallied around me, some of them gave finance, one man from that church purchased the first vehicle, and they commended me to the work in Mexico. In an entire history, most of our workers, not all because the situation's got complex, and because many churches have thrown away the biblical challenge of missions, they don't believe anybody's even lost. But generally speaking, most of our workers, until 100,000 have served with OM, it's because of the local church.

And so I just highly esteem the local church. And I challenge people to get involved, realizing yes, sometimes it can get messy. That's why they need to read my book, Mass Theology.

The second principle, because we just have this short time, is worship, the word worship. Someone said that's fine. Those are the Christian's vital breath.

Someone else said that's the missing jewel in the Christian life. And there's a lot more increase of worship today, at least a certain style of worship where we have great music, and we stand and sing for quite a while. But we need to understand that's only one aspect of worship.

In this little worship meeting, there were only five people. I don't think there was any music. And those five people waited on God and were fasting.

And often, again, in the history of missions, God uses just a small group. When OM got started, it was one summer, which was very short, just three of us. That's when I left university and went to Moody Bible Institute and recruited other people, because the two, Dale and Walter, they had other things that next summer.

And we didn't know what God was doing. So I had to find four other people to join me. It was a little group of five of us, four or five of us that went to Mexico in that summer of 58, when it really got started.

We established bookshops, we established correspondence course, we got our first national worker, Brother Maraguilar, and we saw things happen that began to lay the foundation for this whole movement. Yes, God uses small teams of people, especially who have an emphasis on worship. The third principle from this chapter, of course, is the principle, way more than a principle, the person of the Holy Spirit.

Worshiping, fasting, the Holy Spirit said, dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them. Later on in verse four, sent out by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the true sender.

We are all facilitators. It's sending churches to individuals who have a vision to send. That's not a problem, as long as we understand it's the Holy Spirit behind it, which is, of course, running through the whole book of Acts.

And then the fourth principle is the principle of prayer. Of course, we already had that incorporated together with worship, but there are different kinds of prayer. And many who seem to know a bit about worship seem to know almost nothing of intercession.

Praying for specific individuals, praying for specific situations, standing in the gap, making up the hedge, as it says in the Old Testament. So read verse three. So after more fasting and prayer, the men laid their hands on them and sent them on their way.

Wow. So who is it? Is it the Holy Spirit sending? Or is it this local church? Obviously, it's both. That just reminds me that often some of the disunity we have in churches about what's the best way to do something is not one or the other.

It's often both. And some feel we should do more outreach. Others feel we should have more time in prayer.

We can't let these things compete each other. Others have a vision for different aspects of ministry in terms of humanitarian help. We cannot allow disunity to realize the Holy Spirit works in different ways in different people.

And the Bible expresses things in different ways in different books. So yes, it was the church that laid hands on them, prayed for them, and sent them on their way. And then the fifth principle is the principle of work.

Notice again in verse two, dedicate Paul, Barnabas, and Saul to the special work I have for them. God has a special work for every believer. It may be behind the scenes like my own wife.

It may be unnoticed. It may change from one season to another. But I love that little song.

I only learned it when I came to England. There's a word for Jesus, ready and it's in. I hope each one of you knows you have a specific work.

Some would say a specific ministry for Jesus. Now some people seem to be so much more gifted and they seem to have many different ministries. Make sure that you at least have one.

And then acknowledge the simple fact that evangelizing the world, planting churches, building up God's people is hard work. And that's why I constantly urge people to stand against any form of laziness in their lives. The book of Proverbs, which I study a lot, some of you have read about that in my book Messiology, really has a strong message against laziness.

And we need to be aware of that slothfulness is another term. But then the sixth principle is found there in verse five. There in the town of Salamis, they went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the word of God.

The ministry of preaching. That is being made fun of actually by some people, excuse me, in these days. But we'd see in the book of Acts a huge emphasis on preaching, even that it recorded a lot of extra in a lot of extra space in the book of Acts for Stephen's sermon and then Peter's sermon.

And we're soon going to look at Paul's sermons. Thank God for Martin Lloyd-Jones here in London, such a great preacher who wrote a book on this subject. And I think of the great preaching ministry of Billy Graham.

I was listening to him again last weekend. You could just Google Billy Graham and listen to this great servant, even though he's in heaven, preaching the word of God. Since he's my spiritual father, it usually really ministers very powerfully to me.

We have a lack of evangelistic preaching. We don't sometimes, it's more complicated to arrange it. And Franklin Graham had to carry on quite different from his father.

But I thank the Lord for evangelists like we have J. John here in the UK and others, often attracted to lead preaching and do something else, like be a vicar. But I thank God for those that continue to preach. And though it's not been my main ministry, I've had the joy of speaking evangelistically thousands and thousands of times in many nations, even in the streets, especially in India, and often saw response.

And just thank the Lord for how he uses his word. Tremendous emphasis today on humanitarian ministry. And I believe in that.

We're involved in that. But we must not neglect the preaching the word. And men and women need to allow the Holy Spirit to develop through them the ministry of preaching.

And then the seventh word, which will probably surprise you, found there also in verse five. There in the town of Slemus, they went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the word of God. John Mark went with them as their assistant.

In another translation, it uses the word helper. The ministry of helps is an important ministry. And we need to honor those who are ministering in that way.

I think of a story I heard of a woman who worked in a Christian office as a receptionist. That was an important ministry. And yet many people, many people, when they came to the office, many people, when they came to the office, they didn't even really say hello properly to her in the morning.

How sad. I think of how much work it takes behind the scenes in a church, especially when church is huge. They use schools and have to set the whole thing up every Sunday.

The ministry of helps. Well, actually, Mark found it a bit difficult to discover later on that he actually left the team. And then later on, we'll be studying how Paul and Barnabas had this division because Barnabas wanted to bring back Mark and Paul didn't want him.

He's deserted us. We don't want to bring him back. It seems ridiculous division between Paul and Barnabas.

And they went their way. Well, what a great passage of Scripture. Acts 13.

And I hope we can learn those lessons and put them into practice in our lives. Of course, there's a lot more in chapter 13. If we go over to verse 13, we find Paul preaching in Antioch.

And this is where it's recorded in that same verse 13. There, John Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. But Barnabas and Paul traveled inland to Antioch, to Sadia.

The travels of Paul, of course, are greatly recorded in the book of Acts. It's one of the most important emphases. For me, it also emphasizes that if we're going to evangelize the world, we need to travel.

World evangelism in some ways is being greatly hindered right now because we're unable generally to use the airlines and even train travel and other kinds of travel is quite limited. Our own ship ministry is unable to carry on its ministry right now because of this hindrance. And I think I shared in a previous message, I don't know if anyone has listened to all five of these, that we read from Ephesians 6, 10 through 20.

And we realize it's the evil ones, forces of darkness that are behind much of the terrible things that are going on in the world today. So, Paul is preaching and yet in the midst of it, one of his faithful men stood up or left. Pick it up in verse 16.

So, Paul stood up, lifted his hands to quiet them and started speaking. People of Israel, he said, and you devout Gentiles who fear God of Israel, listen to me. And we see from studying this passage that Paul especially was reaching out to the Gentiles.

This was radical in its day. We've already looked at the vision that came down that changed the whole scene. And yet that battle continues to realize the gospel is for all people, no matter what their religious background, no matter whether they're Jew or Gentile, the gospel is for all people.

And so, Paul's message, which we don't have time to look at carefully, very much is aimed at the Gentiles. And I hope you will read it and study it. And then pick it up at verse 32.

And now Barnabas and I are here to bring you this good news. God's promise to our ancestors has come true in our own time in that God raised Jesus. This is what the second Psalm is talking about when it says, concerning Jesus, you are my son.

Today, I've become your father. For God had promised to raise him from the dead, never again to die. This is stated in the scripture and says, I will give you the sacred blessing that I promised David.

And of course, a beautiful declaration of the gospel. And then jump down to verse 38. Brothers, listen, in this man, Jesus, there is forgiveness of your sin.

Everyone who believes in him is freed from all guilt and declared right with God. Something that the Jewish law could never do. Be careful.

Do not let the prophet's words apply to you. For they said, look, you mockers, be amazed and die. For I am doing something in your own day, something you won't believe, even if someone told you about it.

Here again, a clear presentation of the gospel, what I call radical grace. And if you've not yet experienced that, I pray that soon you may come to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness of sin and receive also freedom from the pains of guilt. Do try to study some of this on your own when you have more time.

Then of course, there were difficulties and problems. And just a reminder that often when we do God's work, there will be opposition. Pick it up in verse 15.

Then the Jewish leaders stirred up both the influential religious women and leaders in the city. They incited a mob against Paul and Barnabas, and they ran them out of town. But they shook off the dust of their feet against them and went to the city of Iconium.

And the believers were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Often when we're out in ministry, as you know, I minister all over India. There are places where we're driven out of town.

We've had our workers attacked. This is increasing in India in these days, churches being burned down. But we need to understand this is not unusual.

This is normal. And this is why we have it so clearly presented to us in the book of Acts. And then in these closing moments, we just take a quick look at chapter 14 where Paul and Barnabas are in Iconium and then also to Lystra and Darby.

Just pick up at verse 8. While they were at Lystra, Paul and Barnabas came upon a man with crippled feet. He'd been that way from birth. So he had never walked.

He was listening as Paul preached. And Paul noticed him and realized he had faith to be healed. So Paul called to him in a loud voice, stand up.

The man jumped up to his feet and started walking. Again, we're back into this subject which runs through the whole book of Acts of Healing. And it's sad that the enemy has brought such confusion and such extremism in this area.

To me, it is so clear from the whole picture of Scripture that God doesn't just always heal everyone. I have seen so much prayer for healing in all kinds of churches. And generally, it's only a few somehow are healed.

And we find out later that some of them, the healing sort of gone and they're ill again. And some of the material written about this really produces guilt in people as they feel they're not healed because of some kind of sin, something in their life that's wrong. This is a terrible twist of the beautiful message of healing.

These are the founding fathers. Obviously, they had a special anointing similar to Jesus. We do sometimes see that anointing in churches today.

But we also see false prophets. We also see people who are making claims. Some of them have been totally exposed as being in the healing business just to make money.

We're living in very confusing days. We need a lot of discernment. But at the same time, we need to take time to pray for those who are ill, getting that clear instruction from the book of James.

We just have to pick it up at the end of the chapter, where it says, finally, they returned by ship to Antioch of Syria, where their journey had begun, and where they had been committed to the grace of God. That was the core of what we were just sharing in Acts 13. So beautiful.

They went back to give a report. Upon arriving in Antioch, they called the church together and reported about their trip, telling all that God has done, and how he has opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. Also, they stayed there with the believers in Antioch for a long time.

One of the heartbreaks I've had in working with missions and churches all these years is that sometimes when a missionary returns from a mission journey, just like Paul and Barbas, maybe they're not as gifted. They're often given very little time in their church to give any kind of report. And I've noticed, even in small group meetings, where my wife and I were present, we had just come from the field with so many stories of God's working, that as people just got talking, they talked about all kinds of other things, often their own situations, and in some cases never asked us a single question about what we've been doing on the mission field.

That isn't always the case, but it is indicative that it's only a small percentage of people that are really spirit-filled Book of Acts people, who have a global vision, who are concerned about missionaries who are suffering. We just had another one of our workers die in a mountain accident in Romania, an outstanding person. We've had others martyred in Lebanon, martyred in Afghanistan.

Only a small percentage of God's people seem to be interested in these things. We seem to just get caught up in so many different tangents, and self-centeredness seems to rule, and greed, and we see it in the way people spend their money, seems to be out of control. Brothers and sisters, let's go back to the Book of Acts.

Let's go back to what we've been studying in these five sessions. God bless you as you make sure you're a doer of the word and not a hearer. Let us pray.

God, we thank you for your word. We thank you for the challenge of Barnabas and Paul. We thank you for this church in Antioch and their emphasis on reaching other parts of the world despite the huge complexities of travel in that day.

And we ask, Lord, that you would search our own hearts, that we may examine our lives to see if we are really Book of Acts Christians rather than people that are just being conformed to the world that we're warned about in Romans 12. For we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/29/SID29460.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/george-verwer/acts-highlights-part-5/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net